

Igor José Úbeda Montenegro

PROFESSIONALIZATION NEEDS OF ENGLISH TEACHERS WITHOUT FORMAL CREDENTIALS

Faculty of Management and Business
Master's Thesis
May 2023

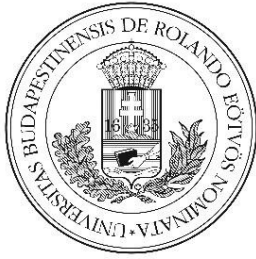
ABSTRACT

Igor José Úbeda Montenegro: Professionalization Needs of Teachers Without Formal Credentials
Master Thesis
Tampere University
Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education
June 2023

This thesis aims to explore the experiences and viewpoints of eight English teachers, two cram school supervisors, and two education and language learning academics regarding the professionalization needs of foreign English teachers without formal credentials working in Taiwan and the readiness of the Taiwanese higher education system to fulfill these needs via a credit-bearing microcredential. The data collected from the twelve participants through semi-structured interviews were analyzed in a qualitative way using thematic analysis. The researcher identified the value that foreign teachers add to the English learning field in Taiwan, the challenges they face regarding their teaching practice and legal access to employment, their training needs based on a set of international standards, their attitudes toward attending a teacher certification program, and the role of the local higher education system in fulfilling these needs. The findings of this study helped make recommendations regarding the modification of language and professional requirements for foreign English teachers, the diversification of the English teaching field, and the design and implementation of a credit-bearing university-level teaching microcredential.

Keywords: microcredentials, teacher professional development, TESOL standards, TESOL certificate, teacher professionalization.

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.



Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem
Pedagógiai és Pszichológiai Kar

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Education and Psychology
Education Science MA

DIPLOMAMUNKA

Igor José Úbeda Montenegro

2023

EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY
EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE MA

**PROFESSIONALIZATION NEEDS OF ENGLISH
TEACHERS WITHOUT FORMAL CREDENTIALS**

Igor José Úbeda Montenegro

István Vilmos Kovács

Director for Education

Methodology

Budapest Metropolitan

University

2023



EÖTVÖS LORÁND TUDOMÁNYEGYETE
PEDAGÓGIAI ÉS PSZICHOLÓGIAI KAR

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, the undersigned Igor José Úbeda Montenegro, a student in the ELTE PPK Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education in awareness of my criminal liability declare and confirm with my signature that the thesis titled Professionalization Needs of English Teachers without Formal Credentials is **my own independent intellectual work** and the use of the referenced, printed and electronic, literature occurred according to the general rules of copyright laws.

I understand that the case of a thesis plagiarism is:

- using a literal quote without quotation marks and without reference;
- using citation of content without referencing to it;
- using another person’s published thoughts as my own.

I, the undersigned state that I know the concept of plagiarism and I understand that in case of plagiarism my thesis will be rejected and in this case disciplinary action may be brought against me.

Budapest, 04 May 2023

.....
signature



EÖTVÖS LORÁND TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM

PEDAGÓGIAI ÉS PSZICHOLÓGIAI KAR

CONFIRMATION OF THESIS CONSULTATION

(a part of the thesis after filled out.)

Student's name: Igor José Úbeda Montenegro

Student's programme: Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education

The thesis's topic: Professionalization Needs of English Teachers without Formal Credentials

Supervisor's name: István Vilmos Kovács

Time of consultation	Topic of the consultation, notes, suggestions	Supervisor's signature
22/06/2022	Feasibility of the topic and literature to explore	
05/12/2022	Thesis timeline and relevance of the topic	
19/12/2022	Redefinition of the topic and literature review	
14/04/2023	Thesis structure, completion and submission date	

I allow the submission of the thesis.

Budapest, 2 May 2023

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized, cursive letters that appear to be 'B. A. A.' or similar.

.....
supervisor's signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the participants of this study. You are all amazing professionals that I had the honor of meeting in my work and academic life in Taiwan. Without you, I would not have been able to complete this thesis.

A mi madre y sus hermanas (tanto de sangre como de vida) quienes han sido importantes en mi vida y han contribuido a mi formación y crianza.

A mi abuela materna quien se fue de este mundo hace dos años, pero ha vivido en mi corazón por treinta y siete.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Research Gap.....	3
1.3 Research Objective.....	4
1.4 Research Questions	4
1.5 Significance of the Research	5
1.6 Delimitations	5
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Teacher Professional Development.....	7
2.3 Teacher Professional Development (TPD) through Microcredentials	9
2.4 Microcredentials in Higher Education	10
2.5 TPD Microcredentials for English Teachers	11
2.6 TESOL Standards for Short-term TEFL/TESL Certificate Programs	13
2.6.1 Domain 1: Language	14
2.6.2 Domain 2: Culture	14
2.6.3 Domain 3: Instruction.....	14
2.6.4 Domain 4: Assessment	15
2.6.5 Domain 5: Professionalism	15
2.7 Native and Non-native English-speaking Teachers	15
2.8 Taiwanese Legislation.....	17
2.9 Summary	19
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	22
3.1 Introduction	22
3.2 Participants	22
3.2.1 Foreign English Teachers.....	24
3.2.2 Taiwanese Employers	25
3.2.3 Taiwanese Academics	25
3.3 Instruments	25
3.4 Data Collection Procedures	26
3.5 Data Analysis	26
3.6 Research Ethics	26
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	28
4.1 Findings	28
4.1.1 Teachers' Experiences.....	28
4.1.2 Experts' Opinions.....	30
4.1.3 Language TESOL Standards (Domain 1)	32
4.1.4 Culture TESOL Standards (Domain 2)	36

4.1.5	Instruction TESOL Standards (Domain 3).....	38
4.1.6	Assessment TESOL Standards (Domain 4)	40
4.1.7	Professionalism TESOL Standards (Domain 5).....	40
4.1.8	Attitudes Toward a University Microcredential.....	41
4.1.9	Universities' Role in Certifying Skills and Building Employability	42
4.2	Summary and Discussion	44
4.2.1	Teachers' Experiences.....	44
4.2.2	Experts' Opinions.....	44
4.2.3	Language TESOL Standards (Domain 1)	45
4.2.4	Culture TESOL Standards (Domain 2)	45
4.2.5	Instruction TESOL Standards (Domain 3).....	46
4.2.6	Assessment TESOL Standards (Domain 4)	46
4.2.7	Professionalism TESOL Standards (Domain 5).....	46
4.2.8	Attitudes Toward a University Microcredential.....	47
4.2.9	Universities' Role in Certifying Skills and Building Employability	48
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS		49
5.1	Introduction	49
5.2	Reasons for the Proliferation of Teachers without Formal Credentials in Taiwan	49
5.3	Reasons for Entering and Staying in the Profession	50
5.4	Reasons to Provide TPD to Foreign Teachers via a University-level Microcredential	51
5.5	Taiwan's Higher Education System Readiness to Offer an English Teaching Microcredential	52
5.6	Teachers' Training Needs	52
5.6.1	Language TESOL Standards (Domain 1)	52
5.6.2	Culture TESOL Standards (Domain 2)	53
5.6.3	Instruction TESOL Standards (Domain 3).....	53
5.6.4	Assessment TESOL Standards (Domain 4)	54
5.6.5	Professionalism TESOL Standards (Domain 5).....	54
5.7	Role of Higher Education.....	55
5.7.1	Factors that Create Positive Attitudes Toward a University Microcredential	55
5.7.2	Universities' Role in Certifying Skills and Building Employability	55
5.8	Recommendations	56
5.8.1	Recommendations at the Government Level:	56
5.8.2	Recommendations at the Higher Education System Level	57
5.9	Limitations.....	58
5.10	Considerations for Future Research	58
REFERENCES		60
APPENDICES		67
Appendix A: Sample of Semi-structured Interview for Teachers		67
Appendix B: Sample of Semi-structured Interview for Academics.....		70

Appendix C: Sample of Semi-structured Interview for Employers.....72

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives the reader an introduction to the current situation of the English language teaching field in the non-formal education sector in Taiwan with a special emphasis on the training needs of foreign English teachers, their role in the field, and the implications of their employment. In this section, the reader finds the background of the problem and the foundations to carry out this research along with the research objectives, questions, and the relevance of this study for the context given.

1.1 Background

The English teaching field in Taiwan is unique since the subject is compulsory from the third grade through university. Local English teachers generally use traditional approaches, and the textbooks and materials selected by their schools do not always reflect the reality and current use of the language. Contrary to the trend of Western editorials in which EFL books are printed entirely in English, on these locally produced textbooks and magazines, the explanations and definitions are typed in Chinese¹ which lowers the input that the student gets in the target language (L1). The teachers mirror the same situation as they tend to avoid using English in the classroom² except when strictly needed, e.g., when vocabulary is modeled or when reading aloud or practicing language drills (Úbeda Montenegro, 2020). The English lessons at local schools focus mainly on preparing students to succeed in tests but lack communicative competence development.

Although, the MOE (2022) sets requirements for the qualifications of teachers in the formal sector, the majority of foreign English teachers in Taiwan work in cram schools without any type of education-related credentials. The high demand for foreign teachers has transformed English teaching into a field that is easy to enter for certain nationalities and the salaries tend to be double of a local teacher's (Yeh, 2002; Huang, 2008) and above the median salary in the island. The promise of fast money with few qualifications has created a wave of unqualified foreign teachers where the most affected population is English language learners who could instead benefit from teachers with pedagogical skills that would be instrumental in helping them acquire the language.

Until 2008, foreign English teachers could only work in the non-formal sector in supplementary education institutions locally known as cram schools (Huang, 2008). Under the Employment Service Act (Ministry of Labor, 2018), foreign teachers were only allowed to work at supplementary education institutions known locally as cram schools. This is not the

¹ Throughout this thesis, the terms Chinese and Mandarin will be used interchangeably to refer to the most spoken language in Taiwan, which is written with traditional Chinese characters.

² The MOE (2018) aims to develop research and training to help teachers "Teach English in English." There are no updates on this endeavor, but it serves as evidence of teachers' unpreparedness to use the L2 in the classroom.

only legislation involved in hiring a foreign citizen, though. Employers seeking to hire foreign teachers must follow the Regulations Governing Educational Institutions at All levels Applying for Work Permits for Foreign Teachers and Their Administration, which state that an English teacher can apply for a work permit if he/she is a passport holder of a country where English is official (Ministry of Education, 2022).

After seeing the relevance of foreign teachers in the informal sector, the MOE convinced legislators to modify the Service Employment Act to allow foreign citizens to work in primary and secondary schools. However, there was no change to the law that discriminates against citizens of non-English-speaking countries. Abiding by these laws, the MOE launched the Foreign English Teacher Recruitment Program (FETRP) in 2008 which opened the doors of the formal education sector to NESTs with education credentials in their home countries (Huang, 2008; MOE, 2022). This program does not include the majority of foreign teachers in Taiwan: the thousands of native and non-native English-speaking teachers working or wishing to work in cram schools. Before the FETRP, NESTs were already being employed in cram schools without any teaching credentials. This practice normalized, over the past few decades, the phenomenon known as the *native speaker fallacy* which makes the public believe that native English speakers (NESs) are automatically qualified to teach English better than non-native English speakers (NNEs) (Phillipson, 1992).

Eventually, the supply of NESTs did not match the market demand. To stay competitive before the eyes of the parents, cram schools needed to offer lessons taught by foreign teachers. When they could not find any more NESs to recruit, cram schools started to look for ways to employ foreign citizens that were not NESs. The way they did this was by looking for exceptions to the laws. Under the Employment Service Act, spouses of Taiwanese citizens do not need to apply for a work permit (Ministry of Labor, 2018); therefore, cram schools started covering the demand for foreign English teachers with NNEs who were married to Taiwanese.

Another source of proficient NNEs was international students attending Mandarin language centers or English medium instruction (EMI) degree programs. For some time, these students were hired without a contract because international students were not allowed to work in Taiwan until 2015, but once that changed, the conditions for students' work permits were different. International students do not apply for a work permit via their employer but via their university. That way, international students can accept any job that their employers consider them apt to do, and cram schools are not limited by the candidates' nationalities. Nonetheless, these NNEs lose the right to continue working as English teachers once they graduate.

Another strategy that is used especially by smaller, independent cram schools is to purchase a license to teach other languages but have the employees teach English instead. Two examples are (1) kindergartens and cram schools that only teach English but purchase a Spanish license because there is a high number of Latin American students that graduate from Taiwanese universities every year and will not find employment easily in their fields, and (2) a well-known online language academy that teaches English, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish where the foreign teachers have their work permits to teach their country's language but teach mostly English because that is the language in more demand.

As can be seen in this section, the Regulations Governing Educational Institutions at All levels Applying for Work Permits for Foreign Teachers and Their Administration takes a discriminatory and unscientific approach to language teaching. Limiting teachers to either teach language courses or teach subject matters only in their countries' official or common languages is an inconsistent way of certifying language proficiency. For example, a Canadian

citizen may teach a course of or in English and French, an American citizen can only teach a course of or in English, and a Belgian citizen can teach a course of or in French, Dutch, and German. Knowing the linguistic realities of the countries in these examples, it is easy to see that nationality does not determine what language one speaks and with what degree of proficiency. It is not uncommon to find people in multilingual countries who only speak one of the official languages or people who hold a nationality but are not nearly as proficient as the majority of people in the country, e.g., US-born citizens raised in other countries or people born outside of the US to foreign parents who acquired their US citizenship via naturalization. But most importantly, nationality does not come with teacher training and skills.

1.2 Research Gap

In the literature about English teachers in East Asia, most of the publications focus on the dichotomy between native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). In these contexts, NNESTs are local teachers and NESTs are foreign teachers from English-speaking countries, mainly Canada, the US, the UK, and Australia. However, there is next to nothing about a third group that lies outside this dichotomy. This group is foreign NNESTs, and they tend to be neglected in the research of English language education. The Taiwanese law does not even recognize the existence of this group of teachers and the contributions they give to the learning field in Taiwan; therefore, the only research (none of which is peer-reviewed or published) on this group of teachers is a handful of theses from international students that are part of this demographic. For the rest of the research field, these teachers either do not exist, or there is no reason to conduct research with them because the system simply does not account for them.

It is important to highlight that the labels NESTs and NNESTs are used only when strictly necessary as this research is not about the native vs. non-native dichotomy. There is already plenty of literature on that topic. This thesis is about viewing all teachers as equally important to the richness of the ELT field and therefore, deserve to be given equal opportunities based not only on their birth language but on their teaching abilities and attitudes, which is not what happens with foreign English teachers in Taiwan. The approach of this research is to benefit all teachers without formal credentials by determining their basic training needs and how higher education could supply this need, making no distinction between teachers' language background or nationality.

The second literature gap that I see is not only that the publications about foreign teachers in the East Asian region are about NESTs but also that none of those publications question or discuss teachers' credentials or teachers' training needs.

Another gap that I aim to fill is that the research on microcredentials is non-existent in East Asia. Therefore, this thesis works as an instrument to open opportunities for research and development of microcredentials in the region.

Lastly, TESOL certificates are the most popular type of microcredential to quickly reskill a professional and have him/her ready to teach English in a short time. However, there are no TESOL certificate providers in Taiwan. Thus, there is no study on how this microcredential may benefit teachers without formal qualifications in the region.

1.3 Research Objective

The main objective of this research is to explore the experiences of current and former foreign English teachers without formal credentials in Taiwan along with the viewpoints of employers and academics to determine teachers' professional development needs and discuss the readiness of the Taiwanese higher education system to fulfill these needs.

The secondary research objectives are:

1. To raise awareness of the implications of not providing TPD for foreign English teachers working in the non-formal education sector.
2. To determine the basic training needs of English teachers without formal credentials and propose a university-level basic training scheme in the form of a credit-bearing microcredential to improve the teaching practice of foreign English teachers in Taiwan.
3. To challenge the *status quo* by initiating a discussion with different professionals about the Taiwanese legislation which creates English teacher recruitment strategies that perpetuate the native speaker fallacy, and to propose a change in favor of a recruitment and hiring approach that accounts for both language proficiency and teaching credentials while promoting a diversity in nationalities, ethnicities, and language backgrounds of teachers.
4. To add to the literature on a group of teachers who tend to be ignored in research and to the literature on microcredentials in a region of the world in which the field is not developed.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives, the researcher aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of the community of foreign English teachers without formal credentials toward completing a university-level microcredential based on the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs (candidate standards)?
2. What are the perceptions of relevant stakeholders regarding Taiwanese universities as providers of a microcredential to offer basic teacher training to foreign English teachers?

1.5 Significance of the Research

Taiwan is a country with a solid education system that consistently performs above the OECD average on the PISA test in all three subjects (Avvisati et al., 2019). These results are evidence of teachers' training and support. However, students' communicative competencies in English do not reflect the test results because language acquisition beyond taking tests is largely dominated by the informal sector of cram schools where students' only chance of developing communicative skills is by taking lessons from mainly foreign English teachers without formal credentials.

This research proposes to change this situation by casting light on the need to professionalize the community of foreign teachers by offering a skill-based microcredential based on the reputable TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs which would be designed specifically for the local context and certified by local universities.

This study is particularly relevant since Taiwan introduced the Bilingual 2030 Policy in 2021 intending to increase the younger generations' English proficiency by, among other means, promoting bilingual education and English medium instruction. Two key elements of this policy are to create links with universities abroad and the recruitment of foreign English-speaking teachers (National Development Council, 2021). This research proposes a more cost-efficient and inclusive approach by suggesting the professionalization of foreign teachers who already live in Taiwan, know the environment better than new recruits, and are more likely to produce a higher return on investment due to the roots they have in Taiwan which make them more likely to stay for a longer period than new recruits. At the same time, this study highlights the potential of the Taiwanese higher education system to drive change and innovation in the English language learning field in the Asia-Pacific region, which usually relies on an international workforce for this endeavor.

1.6 Delimitations

When recruiting participants for this research, it was already expected that the response rate from Taiwanese experts would be low. Despite having contacted several stakeholders in the Taiwanese society, only two employers and two academics replied accepting my invitation to an interview. Nonetheless, this low response rate does not jeopardize the results, since having three stakeholder groups triangulates the data by confirming the results from three different points of view.

On the side of the teachers, the response rate was different than expected. When I sent individual and personalized invitations to the foreign teachers, I selected a more diverse group. The only two criteria I had were (1) not being a Taiwanese citizen, and (2) having worked as an English teacher for at least one year in Taiwan. The potential participants were of different nationalities around the world, including both English and non-English-speaking countries. Half of the invited candidates were current or former international students, and the other half had arrived in the country to start working as English teachers without having ever held a student status on the island. Nevertheless, those who responded to the invitations were all former and current teachers from Honduras and Nicaragua who arrived to study for a master's degree between the years 2016 and 2019. Therefore, their opinions may be skewed toward favoring the conditions of the unprivileged community of teachers who do not have the

birthright to receive an English teacher work permit in Taiwan.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives the reader a synthesis of the topics that are relevant to conducting this research. It starts with a general overview of Teacher Professional development across different regions and subject matters. Then, it shows how microcredentials have supported teacher training, especially online. Afterward, it continues to explain how microcredentials have successfully been integrated into higher education systems by being offered at universities and legitimized through qualification frameworks. Finally, the chapter explores topics relevant to the language teaching field such as microcredentials for English teachers, standards for English teacher training, and topics relevant to the English teaching field in Taiwan such as the teacher's mother language and legislation related to teachers' employment.

2.2 Teacher Professional Development

One of the most important requirements to attain high quality in educational processes is the teachers' pedagogical competencies, which are not innate characteristics of a group of people, but a set of skills that must be cultivated constantly along a teacher's career (Ljubetić and Kostović-Vranješ, 2008). In most parts of the world, primary and secondary education teachers are required to complete not only formal studies in the subjects they will teach but also pedagogical training related to teaching said subject and age-specific pedagogy. Even though institutions should be responsible for their employed teachers' professional development (TPD), there is a consensus that initial teacher training should take place at the undergraduate level (Ayodele & Akindutire, 2009; Raud & Orehhova, 2020; Schina et al., 2020; Schiering et al., 2021; Espejo Villar et al., 2022; Granero-Gallegos et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2022; Palacios et al., 2022; Vilppola et al., 2022).

This is not necessarily the case for all teachers, particularly those outside primary and secondary education. The majority of university teachers, who tend to have a high degree of knowledge in their subject matter and even advanced research skills, have rarely participated in formal teacher training nor have they been required to do so (Novianti & Nurlaelawati, 2019). Due to the need for pedagogical training of lecturers, universities around the world have started to require Ph.D. students to complete teaching-related modules and practice as well as to offer TPD to their in-service professors. These development programs have been well received in varied contexts such as the Indonesian (Novianti & Nurlaelawati, 2019) and the Slovenian (Aškerc Veniger, 2016) university teacher community. In the Slovenian study, this was especially true among foreign language teachers, who tend to receive little to no training when hired outside of the formal education sector.

Ljubetić and Kostović-Vranješ (2008) propose that pedagogical competence can be enhanced by fostering a capacity for “self-evaluation and practice reflection” which can be attained by participating in quality teacher development programs, which could not only be offered at universities but also at the hiring institutions themselves as their success relies on “pedagogically competent individuals [as] participants in the education process.” In other words, a learning organization can only be as solid as the pedagogical foundations built by its educators and leadership team in a context of “reflection and constructive dialogue, as well as [pedagogical] competences of all the participants” (Ljubetić & Kostović-Vranješ, 2008).

There exists a commonly held belief that the teaching practice is a solitary one and that instructors hold a position of authority and independence to plan their lessons and exams without much input, except for the mandatory intervention of their superiors. However, among the pedagogical competences that modern trends in educational leadership promote is the ability to work in an environment in which teachers exchange ideas with each other and even design course outlines, lessons, learning activities, and assessments cooperatively with other peers, giving rise to opportunities for mutual learning, exchange of best practices, and constant collaboration, all of which result in a more successful learning organization (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). This style of work can come naturally to some individuals who possess the intrinsic motivation to improve their teaching skills and practice; however, if this is not an innate characteristic of an individual, it must be taught either at their institution by peers and management, or through TPD activities.

According to Fullan (2005 as cited in Ljubetić & Kostović-Vranješ, 2008), when teachers become pedagogically competent, their self-evaluation, reflection, critical thinking, collaboration, and peer-feedback abilities evolve continuously, allowing them to improve their practice not only from their day-to-day experience but also from a previously acquired theoretical background in pedagogy. To be considered pedagogically competent, teachers need to possess practical teaching skills and knowledge of teaching theory, an understanding of students’ development and learning process, and an ability to plan, observe and reflect on the teaching and learning process. Just like professional development cannot be achieved by a teacher only through practical experience, it cannot be achieved either without attending formal training in their subject matter and in teaching skills (Cheatham & Chivers, 1996; Ljubetić & Kostović-Vranješ, 2008).

In some Western countries, there are regulations in place or at least minimal expectations for foreign language teachers not only to achieve an intermediate to high proficiency in the language they teach but also to obtain the credentials that guarantee that the teachers have completed certain training and/or examination to certify that they can work as language instructors. Nonetheless, there are countries where foreign language teachers tend to lack these requirements. Unlike university teachers around the world, who are not generally required to have previous pedagogical training but have the training and research skills in their field (Merkt, 2017), the expectations for foreign language teachers in some non-Western societies may be different. One example of this phenomenon is the recruitment of non-local English teachers in East Asia are hired based on their native speaker status, nationality, or even physical features without regard to any formal training in the language or the pedagogy for teaching foreign languages to different age groups (Cook, 2004; Pavlenko, 2007; Wang & Lin, 2013, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2022; Mejía Cárcamo, 2019; Úbeda Montenegro, 2020).

Despite the correlation between the employment of untrained teachers and low student

achievement and performance (Mukeredzi, 2016; Van Zyl et al., 2013; Wakim, 2013), institutions, especially those in remote areas, may decide to hire unqualified teachers due to shortages of professionals with pedagogical training (Chen, 2016; Mukeredzi, 2016; Tuna, 2021) and increasing market needs that have pushed some institutions to hire these demographics. One of the downsides of employing unqualified teachers is that they lack the knowledge of how to design a cohesive lesson in which all learning activities and assessment work in line with the learning objectives, resulting in “overactive lessons rather than interactive lessons, where multiple activities are just as ineffective as no activities at all” (Dziubinski, 2015, p. 317).

Having teacher populations who initially lack basic teaching training does not mean that all teachers in these populations are completely unqualified. Most teaching practitioners lie somewhere along a pedagogical competence continuum and constant TPD efforts are necessary to maintain and improve the quality of teaching (Ljubetić & Kostović-Vranješ, 2008). Therefore, despite entering the profession without teaching-specific qualifications, teachers can move forward in their teaching skillset through personal and institutional efforts. In the context of university lecturers, there is a growing tendency at higher education institutions to provide in-house initial training to non-professional teachers. Furthermore, university teaching has been forced to evolve quickly due to the demands of the 21st century but especially the COVID-19 pandemic, and required teaching certification for lecturers teaching online has taken the form of online self-paced microcredentials (Howard & Babb, 2022). However, in the case of language teachers, their institutions may provide continuous development, but initial teacher training is rarely done in-house.

2.3 Teacher Professional Development (TPD) through Microcredentials

One of the most common professionalization programs for novice teachers is the variety of postgraduate certificates at universities. These certificate programs offer a curriculum composed of foundational modules in education and of modules specific to the teaching methodologies for the subject plus a practicum in which they teach under the supervision of university tutors from whom they receive feedback on their performance (Mukeredzi et al., 2015). However, in our current changing market, traditional university degrees and subsequent postgraduate certificates do not necessarily keep up with the evolving skills demands of the modern world. Universities can supply this skill demand by embracing microcredentials into their physical or virtual classrooms as an alternative to their existing academic offer. Microcredentials are accreditations that prove the attainment of specific competency-based learning outcomes of short training/educational activities based on given standards; they have a reliable assessment and are aimed at equipping the learner with skills that they will employ immediately at the workplace. Therefore, they are meant to increase the learners’ employability even for entry-level professionals (Cook, 2021; McGreal & Olcott, 2022).

Microcredentials are used in the higher education realm in the less prestigious community colleges in the US to deliver standard-based quality training for students looking to learn a vocational or technical trade. These courses include an important practical component that can take the form of an apprenticeship (Olcott, 2021). Nonetheless, the current microcredentials market is dominated by private providers in the industry sector who seek alliances with agencies, companies, professional associations, or peer reviewers to assess and validate their courses. Even in some of the rare cases when microcredentials’ curriculum and

assessments have been designed and approved by universities, they tend to take place outside of the traditional university environments. TESOL certificate providers offer online, blended, or onsite modalities.

Microcredentials have been used and proven effective in teacher professional development across different levels and subjects in helping teachers deepen their understanding of their subject area and issues in teaching practice (Luke & Young, 2020; Burrows et al., 2021; White, 2021; Borlan et al., 2022). Microcredentials have also been used to address TPD aimed at developing student-centered competencies for teachers and administrators (Staker et al., 2020). The competency-based approach of microcredentials helps teachers get practical skills that impact their teaching performance immediately. Participants of one study reported that their participation in microcredentials had been more impactful than other TPD activities in which they had participated before. They felt that the tailor-made microcredential modules were relevant to their needs and made them reflect and solve problems instead of just listening to a facilitator (Borlan et al., 2022). At the same time, the online modality of some of these courses helped teachers in remote areas to access TPD opportunities that would normally not be available to them due to their location and COVID-19 restrictions.

Microcredentials have shown to be valuable not only for in-service teachers but also for pre-service teachers participating in undergraduate teacher training. Microcredentials entry-level training such as TESOL certificates as part of student teachers' work-integrated learning increases the teachers' confidence and employability by providing them with a document certifying their achievement of the skills and competences of such widely known certificates (Ashcroft et al., 2021). This shows the value that microcredentials could have in supplying initial teacher training to pre-service teachers and remedial teacher training to in-service teachers without formal credentials. Microcredentials are effective in training teachers in a short time because of their competency-based approach that helps instructors connect their training to their professional practice at the time that they create a learning community, and exchange peer feedback and best practices with other trainees (Luke & Young, 2020).

2.4 Microcredentials in Higher Education

One of the biggest challenges that microcredentials present to higher education systems, despite not being generally in the interest of the consumers, is the question of credits. The fact that microcredentials are usually not designed with a focus on how much time a student should spend doing work during class delivery and independently presents a challenge when higher education institutions wish to convert their microcredentials workload to university credit units, and in the cases when the institution assigns a number of credits to the course, these may not necessarily be accepted toward more formal academic programs even within the same institution, as the issue of credit conversion and transferability has traditionally been at the discretion of academic units (Olcott, 2021; McGreal & Olcott, 2022; McGreal et al., 2022). However, Olcott (2021) argues that this challenge can be overcome by the competency-based assessment approach of most microcredentials which guarantees that the trainee has achieved a certain skill and performance level.

Despite the challenges regarding the recognition of microcredentials, there are regional efforts to integrate them into the formal education sector thanks to national qualification frameworks (NQF). In Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, NQFs have opened up

opportunities for microcredentials to be more widely recognized and count toward further certification or a degree program. NQFs can facilitate the conversion of microcredential achievement to credit-bearing courses. This approach to solving the credits or quality issues is evidently not feasible in countries that lack national qualifications frameworks. One such region without NQFs is the US where applying for credits from microcredentials can become difficult and costly; one example is the credits offered by one of the top three TESOL Certificates in which students who opt for these credits must pay 500 US dollars with no guarantee of acceptance at other programs and with a disclosure that the credits cannot be used for the master's degree program in the same field at the same institution (SIT Graduate Institute, n.d.).

Another issue found in recent literature (McGreal et al., 2022) is that there is a lack of engagement by senior leadership toward microcredentials and a lack of will to teach them from faculty members. All the issues described previously and this last one could be interrelated and might be improved once the quality and credit issues are addressed. Microcredentials are less costly and quicker to attain than traditional degrees and have the potential for a higher return on investment. They also show more versatility in terms of consumers' choices of learning. Therefore, solving the issues of trust and quality assurance must be a priority for universities.

Among the actions that higher education institutions can take are aligning microcredential competencies to NQFs and the creation of credentials repositories like Lumina Foundation's Registry, following the guidelines described in the Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks (Cedefop, ETF, UNESCO & UIL, 2019a). Volume one of the aforementioned inventory, which addresses the individual states or regions' efforts regarding qualification frameworks, vastly lacks the inclusion of microcredentials in their country/region reports. The Cedefop National Qualifications frameworks (NQFs) online tool shows that less than one-fifth of 38 countries committed to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) show some opportunity for inclusion for microcredentials.

Nonetheless, the European region is investing heavily in microcredential-related projects like (1) MICROBOL which attempts to integrate the Bologna Process into microcredentials and resulted in the proposal of a common European framework for microcredentials, (2) MicroHE which analyzes the integration of microcredentials into European Higher Education, and (3) MicroCredX which aims to address the needs of HE, students and industry through microcredentials (Microcredentials.eu, 2022). Another project dedicated to addressing the issues of online microcredentials is the European MOOC Consortium's Common Microcredential Framework which is in development and aims to provide a qualifications framework for Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC) microcredentials (EMC, n.d.). All these efforts are key to solving the quality, recognition, trust, and credit issues of microcredentials in the European continent, and, based on the results of such actions, the best practices could be exported and adapted to the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

2.5 TPD Microcredentials for English Teachers

Kurnia Irmawati et al. (2021) define pedagogical competence as the “mastery on learning methods or techniques that help students when [the] learning process takes place.” Their study focuses on EFL university teacher’s pedagogical competences related to teaching techniques, material development, classroom management, and assessment/evaluation. All these areas can only be developed by actively participating in TPD, research, cooperation, and peer shadowing/feedback. Pedagogical competences can be developed through trainee-oriented, skill-based TPD which trains teachers in student-oriented teaching techniques (Tarwiyah et al., 2018). They are essential in the teaching profession as they are a predictor of instructional quality and student progress (König et al., 2021), and guarantee the success of new curriculum implementation (Firman et al., 2019).

In the particular case of teachers of ESOL, those professionals who teach English without formal pedagogical training rely on very basic techniques such as language drills (repetition) to teach pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or reading because they have usually not been trained to design communicative activities that involve deeper cognitive processes; this type of meaningful, contextualized activities tend to be more effective and have a higher rate of success since the student uses the intended language in spontaneous speech (Chien, 2019). Chien (2012) explains that the contemporary English instruction demands in Taiwan require teachers who possess solid pedagogical competencies to implement innovative curricula and alternative assessments.

Tran-Than (2021) found that novice teachers in Vietnam cannot teach ESOL communicatively and rely heavily on the most traditional method, Grammar-Translation (GTM), despite having high language proficiency and being discouraged to use it during their undergraduate teacher training. The participants could not clearly describe the characteristics of traditional and communicative approaches and expressed that they had forgotten the theoretical foundation. These participants also exhibited a lack of skills to motivate students and design communicative lessons despite having gone through a four-year undergraduate teacher training that focuses on communicative teaching. This study found that these novice teachers did not see traditional forms of TPD as helpful for their needs and those who considered pursuing a master’s degree were motivated to do so only for career progression, not for competence development. About the current development opportunities in Vietnam, the author concluded that “seminars, conferences, and workshops are primarily expert-driven, one-off, and exclusive” (p. 46). Therefore, microcredentials tailored to the needs of communicative language teaching could be an approach to helping novice teachers develop the teaching competences they did not acquire at university. In the particular case of addressing the teachers’ lack of theoretical foundation, microcredentials like the most prestigious TESOL certificates available on the market have a basic theory component usually at the beginning of their curriculum.

The most popular entry-level qualification for the ELT profession is a type of microcredentials known as TESOL, TESL, or TEFL certificates. These credentials are a re-skilling option for individuals with no language teaching training and an up-skilling option for those with some language teaching training or experience. TESOL certificate training may take place at universities, especially in the USA, but most of them take place at training centers around the world that offer a short program that “meets consumer demand for a focus on practice while offering an opportunity for a swift career change and/or means to obtain necessary certification with limited financial and time commitments” (Hobbs, 2013, p. 163). Knowing the consequences of employing unqualified teachers, the previously mentioned TESOL certificate courses aim at providing the “bare essentials that will get a novice teacher

through the first few months [of practice]” (Hobbs, 2013, p. 165). In Hobbs’s (2013, p. 168) surveys, novice teachers referred to “teaching practice, tips, and techniques as the most valuable [elements of TESOL certificates],” highlighting the value of such competency-based approaches and a strong preference for skills that they could “immediately apply to the teaching practice” which resulted in increased confidence regarding classroom management and teaching techniques. Similar thoughts were also shared by the more experienced teachers that participated in the course. These experienced teachers also highlighted teaching practice and the feedback process as valuable. Nonetheless, the voices of these ‘veterans’ echoed the opinion that the course only offers the very basics a first-time ESOL teacher needs and does not fulfill the needs for deeper knowledge and skills that already qualified teachers may have, such as language awareness and theoretical grounding. These opinions from the participants support the idea that a microcredential like the TESOL certificates in that study are particularly beneficial for teachers with no previous teaching training. One lowlight that most participants on both sides expressed was that the course was too stressful due to its intensive nature; the total tutor contact hours were 130 in a four-week period. Most TESOL certificates take place over four weeks and range from 120 to 180 hours (Atkinson et al., 2008; Hobbs, 2013; SIT Graduate Institute, n.d.).

Generally, the main consumers of TESOL certificates around the world are native English speakers (NESs) who wish to start or advance in a TESOL career at home but mostly abroad (Anderson, 2015). This does not mean, however, that non-native English speakers (NNEs) are not interested in these microcredentials. In fact, Anderson (2015) found out that NNEs who participated in two of the most prestigious TESOL certificates were more likely to have previous teaching experience and training than the NESs.

Arguably one of the most popular, affordable, and accessible microcredentials that offers TPD is the Coursera specialization Teach English Now! Which, upon successful completion, leads to an Arizona State University TESOL Certificate. The course complies with the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs and can be completed in 16 weeks when taken intensively. Despite having an approximate cost of USD 392, learners can apply for 100% financial aid which is very likely to be approved. Participants can always enroll as auditors to only view the materials; although they will not receive the Moodle certificates or the TESOL certificate if they choose this option. Mabuan (2018, p. 205), who participated in the course along with other colleagues to improve his teaching skills and access TPD that was not available at his university in the Philippines, attributes their success to the following aspects “(1) comprehensive course design, (2) avant-garde teaching approaches of the MOOC instructors, and (3) engaging and supportive learning community.” In a market plagued with TESOL certificates aimed at native English speakers, these Coursera specializations give learners a chance of interacting with other ELT enthusiasts from around the world through the peer-feedback on assignments and demo lessons, and through discussion forums.

2.6 TESOL Standards for Short-term TEFL/TESL Certificate Programs

All major TESOL certificate programs follow the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs. This is paid-for material that I did not purchase and is not available at any of the libraries I had access. However, it was impossible to talk about proposing an English language teacher microcredential without following this successful formula. Therefore, I got in contact with the TESOL International Association, and after explaining my objective, I received a presentation from a virtual seminar where they introduced the standards. Since my focus population is the community of teachers without formal credentials, the standards that helped me determine their training needs and that were used to design the interviews are the candidate standards which are grouped into five domains: language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism (TESOL International Association, 2015). A list with the candidate standards grouped into the five domains was generated and is attached below.

2.6.1 Domain 1: Language

Standard 1: Language as a System of Communication

- Structure and components of language such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics,
- Role of language in society,
- Importance of English in the world today

Standard 2: First and Second Language Acquisition and Development

- Theories of first and second language acquisition,
- How people learn a language in a variety of contexts, from a variety of language and educational backgrounds, at different ages and for different purposes

2.6.2 Domain 2: Culture

Standard 1: Connections among Culture, Language and Learning

- The effects of culture on language learning
- How beliefs, traditions and mores affect language learning
- Similarities and differences between native cultures and those of English-dominant cultures
- Knowledge of world cultures

2.6.3 Domain 3: Instruction

Standard 1: Planning Instruction

- Needs assessment
- Authentic use of language
- Integrating all skills
- Formative and summative assessment

Standard 2: Implementing Instruction

- Including activities for meaningful and authentic use of language
- Including activities for all skills and a variety of purposes
- Creating a supportive and accepting classroom environment
- Understanding the importance of collaboration in all settings

Standard 3: Using Instructional Resources

- Selecting and adapting appropriate print and virtual material
- Using available technology

2.6.4 Domain 4: Assessment

Standard 1: Assessment Theory

- Purposes and types of assessment
- Appropriate use of the results

Standard 2: Assessment Practices

- Performance-based assessment tools and tasks
- Criterion-referenced assessments and appropriate rubrics
- Self-and peer-assessment techniques

2.6.5 Domain 5: Professionalism

Standard 1: Professional Learning and Growth

- Classroom research and professional growth opportunities

Standard 2: Professional Ethics and Behavior

- Professionalism in TESOL, appropriate relationships, informed consent, and confidentiality

2.7 Native and Non-native English-speaking Teachers

Despite being an international language with most of its speakers being L2 users, there

is a dichotomy in the field of TESOL, being both ends of this dichotomy the native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and the non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). The former usually lack knowledge of regional varieties of English and the latter have usually learned and are required to teach a standard variety of English (Li, 2017). In some countries, NESTs are viewed as the most qualified individuals to teach the language regardless of any other qualifications. This tends to happen in certain areas of Europe and Asia, which offer attractive employment opportunities for expatriates and travelers from the inner circle of English (Kachru, 1992), which tends to be the English varieties that people associate with the most prestige. However, this is not the case in all regions of the world, especially those which do not provide the socioeconomic appeal for expats and whose teaching workforce relies on usually more qualified local staff (Smith, 2016).

There are obvious (but at the same time questionable) advantages that NESTs possess regarding linguistic competence, as it is believed that the native speaker (NS) provides a role model speech, especially in terms of “pronunciation, up-to-date authentic usage, and idioms” (Christiansen, 2022, p. 505). However, with the advances in ICT, access to authentic speech is possible. In the context of English as a world language/lingua franca, choosing a particular ideal native English speaker keeps the learners from exposure to other standard and non-standard varieties of English (Christiansen, 2022).

Pae (2016) found that, despite valuing the language skills of both groups of teachers highly, a group of Korean university students felt more motivated when taking classes with NESTs than with local Korean teachers. Papers like the aforementioned should be read with caution, and the author should pay more attention to several details. The reason is that despite being a quantitative study, this alleged preference may not be a preference over the teachers’ language background but a preference for a subject. In this study, half of the Korean teachers taught exam-taking skills while all the NESTs taught conversation courses. This difference in the nature of the course skews the results to favor the NESTs. The only way to compare NNESTs and NESTs is when they are teaching the same courses. Demographic information of the teachers was not described in this paper, but given that these were university instructors, it is assumed that they had formal degrees in TESOL or related professions. This is also implied when he suggests that “what matters most in EFL teaching is not the nativeness of the instructor per se, but professional expertise required for the successful delivery of instruction” (p. 174). A similar study with university students in Sichuan, China revealed that the learners valued NESTs’ communication skills and English proficiency and knowledge, but that there was no significant difference between NESTs and NNESTs in terms of pedagogical skills. It is important to highlight, though, that neither NESTs and NNESTs at this university are required to have a degree in language teaching; the NNESTs come from English language-related fields, and the NESTs from diverse unrelated fields. This pattern of recruiting NESTs without formal credentials in language teaching is repeated across all of East Asia.

As mentioned in the first chapter, this thesis is not about the differences between NESTs and NNESTs. Therefore, there is no need to include extensive literature about this topic. This section was added because a phenomenon known as the *native speaker fallacy* (Phillipson, 1992), in which there exists a belief that NESs are the ideal English teachers, is very prevalent in Taiwan. Unfortunately, this is not only a societal belief, but it is also institutionalized as a law that prevents foreign NNESTs from legally holding an English teacher position. This reduces the diversity of the teaching workforce and enforces discriminatory recruitment and hiring practices in educational institutions at all levels.

These practices go against the TESOL International Association’s *Position statement*

against discrimination of nonnative speakers of English in the field of TESOL. As the leading authority in the ELT field, the TESOL International Association declared that “nonnative English-speaking educators bring a uniquely valuable perspective to the ESL/EFL classroom, and so can closely identify with the cross-cultural and language learning experience that their students are experiencing” (2006). They highlight that many NNESTs “master both a second language and a second culture [...] thus the nonnative English-speaking educator can serve as a powerful role model for students.” The statement condemns discrimination against teachers based on their native tongue and explains that language proficiency, in either a native or non-native English-speaking teacher, is only one component of the assessment of a teacher candidate, and that “[t]eaching skills, teaching experience, and professional preparation should be given as much weight as language proficiency.”

Finally, the TESOL International Association (2006) summarizes the consequences of using *native-speakerist*³ approaches to the recruitment and hiring of teachers:

[T]he use of the labels “native speaker” and “nonnative speaker” in hiring criteria is misleading, as this labeling minimizes the formal education, linguistic expertise, teaching experience, and professional preparation of teachers. All educators should be evaluated within the same criteria. Nonnative English-speaking educators should not be singled out because of their native language.

2.8 Taiwanese Legislation

One factor to understand why there are so many English teachers without formal credentials in Taiwan is the Taiwanese legislation. The Regulations Governing Educational Institutions at All levels Applying for Work Permits for Foreign Teachers and Their Administration is the law that outlines the conditions for granting a foreign citizen a work permit as a teacher. This law states the following in its article 4. (1) About foreign language teachers: “any language course taught by that person shall be a course on an official language of the nation that issued the passport of that foreign teacher.” (2) About English teachers “English shall be the official or common language of his/her nationality [...] If a foreign language course is taught in a language other than English, that language shall be the official language of the person’s nationality” (Ministry of Education, 2022).

This legislation, for the most part, does not account for any professional qualifications for teachers who wish to work outside of the formal education sector, i.e., primary, secondary, or tertiary education. Therefore, thousands of visitors from English-speaking countries have filled the market need for foreign teachers, as they are perceived as valuable assets for local learners. However, the demands of the local market cannot be filled under these conditions.

³ Holliday (2005) defines native-speakerism as “an established belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology.”

Therefore, local language academies known as cram schools have resorted to employing citizens of non-English-speaking countries as English teachers, resorting to legal loopholes. The first one is that spouses of Taiwanese citizens with a marriage residence card do not need a work permit. The second one is that international students' work permits are sponsored by their universities and receive a work permit without limitations to what kind of work they can engage in (Ministry of Labor, 2018). The third one is that schools can apply for a license to teach a language other than English and hire teachers from non-native English-speaking countries under a work permit to teach their country's official language. This last practice is illegal, but it is widespread, and the authorities pretend that they don't know. However, not all schools have the ability to do this because they are part of a big company that is not willing to go out of their way and because applying for a language license has a high cost to maintain. Therefore, a school must select carefully which language licenses to apply for based on which nationalities they plan to hire.

Interestingly, the newest update to the Regulations Governing Educational Institutions at All levels Applying for Work Permits for Foreign Teachers and Their Administration (Ministry of Education, 2022) requires that teachers wishing to work in the formal sector have a:

- (1) University degree or above in education, English or a related field, and have studied English language teaching methods, teaching assessment, and introduction to second language learning, and have more than 120 hours of trial teaching experience;

or

- (2) TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) certificate, TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate or CELTA (Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults) certificate recognized by the competent authority.

This new requirement for primary and secondary teachers could help establish a localized university microcredential that would equate to the second item but with a special emphasis on teaching in Taiwan.

One aspect of utmost importance to be mentioned in this legislation is that the limitations on teachers' nationalities placed by the Regulations Governing Educational Institutions at All levels Applying for Work Permits for Foreign Teachers and Their Administration restrict some teachers' access to public funds for language teaching. In its inception, the formerly named Foreign English Teacher Recruitment Program focused most of its efforts on attracting citizens of four English-speaking countries (Huang, 2003). This approach was evidently discriminatory and catered to the native speaker fallacy that is well alive and thriving in Taiwan at the same time that acted as a gatekeeper for determining what nationalities spoke 'the right English'. Nowadays, the program under the name of Foreign English Teacher Program (FETP) is still only open to citizens from countries where the

“official or common language” is English (Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program, n.d.). This recruitment strategy, based on the MOE’s legislation, excludes the nationalities that the Ministry of Education considers inappropriate or unfit to teach English. The benefits of the FETP include competitive salaries, two-way flight reimbursement, accommodation subsidy, health insurance, performance bonuses, and overtime pay. In the case of teaching assistants, the same benefits apply but with a lower wage, transportation insurance, and monthly funds available to take a TESOL certificate. The FETP is in line with the National Development Council’s (2021) Bilingual 2030 Policy which, among other endeavors, aims to recruit foreign teachers at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

2.9 Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the topics that are considered relevant to this thesis. It starts by emphasizing the importance of TPD for the success of the teacher practice. In the first section, it is explained how teachers around the world are traditionally required to receive initial teacher training during their undergraduate education and then need to engage in continuous professional development along their careers and the role that employers play in guaranteeing these TPD opportunities. In this initial section of the chapter, the reader is presented with exceptions to this tradition by exploring the teaching practices at universities, schools in remote areas, and language academies where there is a trend to have teachers whose only relevant expertise in their subject matter and lack teaching skills training, and how the teachers’ lack of pedagogical skills impacts student achievement.

After exploring TPD from a general perspective, chapter 2 moves on to examine the role of microcredentials in TPD. The studies in this section show that microcredentials tend to be more relevant than other forms of TPD due to their approach to developing skills that teachers can immediately use in their classrooms. Through the experiences of these teachers, section 2.3 helps to support the proposal of a microcredential to provide initial training to teachers without formal credentials.

In section 2.4, the situation of microcredentials in higher education is explored, and issues related to this topic are abundant. Globally, the microcredential market is dominated by external providers and universities tend to stay away from this realm, evidencing the great opportunity that universities have in this modality. Among the challenges of higher education microcredentials is that they are different in nature from the traditional courses offered at universities. Microcredentials tend to have a less academic component and a more applied approach. Some of them even do not have a fixed number of hours to complete. This generates skepticism in academic units and university leadership who are confounded by how to convert the competence-based approach of microcredentials to credit-bearing modules, and this issue is addressed with examples of national and regional qualification frameworks and other microcredential-related projects in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

The next section focuses on microcredentials for English teachers. This section highlights the important role that teacher training has in the second language acquisition process and how a lack of training results in busy lessons without linguistic competence development.

The field of TESOL, is a veteran in microcredentials. The most widely known is the variety of TESOL certificates available in the market. TESOL certificates were introduced by reputable institutions that belonged to prestigious universities. Nonetheless, with the commercialization of English learning, there has been a proliferation of online academies that offer unaccredited programs which tend to be chosen by professionals looking to switch careers over the more established courses due to their lower cost.

This section then shares a success story of a group of university instructors in the Philippines who improved their teaching practice by taking a TESOL certificate offered by Arizona State University through Coursera. This story serves as an example of how a TESOL certificate offered by a reputable university can collaborate with TPD when resources and time are limited.

The following section explores the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs, in particular the candidate standards which were proposed as the foundation for this study's microcredential. The TESOL International Association is the largest professional association in the ELT sector and helps in the global development of the field. Therefore, their standards are adequate to explore the training needs of our target group. The standards have five domains: language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism.

Almost toward the end, there is a section that discusses the outdated dichotomy between native and non-native English speakers which is relevant when researching the Taiwan ELT field. A short summary of literature protesting the discrimination against NNESTs in recruitment and hiring practices. This topic is relevant to every research on ELT in Taiwan because the Taiwanese society and government idolize NESTs. However, the literature review does not explore whether NESTs are the best teachers or if NNESTs can be as good as or better than NESTs because that is not the topic of interest. The approach in this thesis is to give every teacher without formal credentials the chance to access TPD to compete in the job market under objective standards.

This chapter ends with an overview of the Taiwanese legislation which has shaped the ELT field on the island. Two laws directly affect foreign citizens' access to legal employment as a language teacher. The first one is the Employment Service Act (MOL, 2018) which allows foreign citizens to work as language teachers in cram schools and international schools as well as in primary and secondary schools for local students under the approval of the MOE. This approval is usually linked to programs such as the FETP or also other programs that recruit language teachers from Southeast Asian countries. This law also establishes open access to work permits for international students and does not apply to spouses of Taiwanese citizens. Therefore, international students and spouses of Taiwanese can legally work as English teachers regardless of their nationality. The former can only work up to 20 hours per week during active semesters and up to 40 during winter and summer breaks.

If the applicable law were the Employment Service Acts, the ELT panorama would be completely different today. However, the Regulations Governing Educational Institutions at All levels Applying for Work Permits for Foreign Teachers and Their Administration (MOE, 2022) establish a nationality requisite to apply for a language teacher work permit as a foreign citizen. These regulations allow employers to hire foreign citizens only as teachers of the official or common languages in their country. This has forced some employers to reject qualified teachers and given a justification to those who believe in the native speaker fallacy to

discriminate against NNESTs. Nonetheless, some open-minded employers have resorted to hiring teachers from non-English-speaking countries by purchasing a license to teach those teachers' language in their schools. Some employers, however, are not willing to employ this strategy or do not use it as part of their business plan.

The Regulations Governing Educational Institutions at All levels Applying for Work Permits for Foreign Teachers and Their Administration (MOE, 2022) also establish professional requirements for teachers who are approved to work in primary and secondary schools for local students. In the case of English teachers, one of the options to fulfill the professional requirements is by presenting a TESOL or CELTA certificate. This last item along with the goals of increasing local students' English proficiency as stated in the Bilingual 2030 policy (NDC, 2021) justifies the proposal of an autochthonous university microcredential based on the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology of this qualitative study. The methodology is oriented to support the achievement of the main goal and secondary research goals, which aim to determine the TPD needs of foreign English teachers without formal credentials in Taiwan, propose a credit-bearing university-level microcredential to support these needs, discuss the readiness of the Taiwanese higher education system to offer this microcredential, discuss the legal constraints that currently limit foreign teachers employment and could jeopardize the success of the program, and to add to the literature of a neglected group in ELT research and to the literature on microcredentials in a region where this format has not taken off yet.

This methodology also supports the research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of the community of foreign English teachers without formal credentials toward completing a university-level microcredential based on the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs (candidate standards)?
2. What are the perceptions of relevant stakeholders regarding Taiwanese universities as providers of a microcredential to offer basic teacher training to foreign English teachers?

In this chapter, the reader can find a description of the participants, their demographic information, and the stakeholder group that they belong to. There are also details about the instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study belong to three stakeholder groups: (1) foreign English teachers, (2) Taiwanese employers, and (3) Taiwanese academics. The choice of which stakeholder groups to include was done in this matter because these participants are the main stakeholders that could answer inquiries related to foreign teachers' training needs and the role that higher education can play in such an endeavor. Not only did the three stakeholder groups help answer the research questions, but they also helped triangulate the data as all three groups' perspectives worked to identify specific themes and issues during the interviews.

The sampling for this study was convenience sampling. As a former international student and English teacher in Taiwan, I have contacts in all three stakeholder groups, and they were invited to participate in an online interview. From the group of English teachers, the sample became very homogeneous in terms of age, nationalities, and education level; I can

speculate that the response to the interview invitation was positive only from these participants due to empathy and solidarity since they have also written master theses. Other invited candidates were undergraduate students and teachers that did not study in Taiwan; none of them replied to the invitation.

In the case of the academics, six professors in the fields of education, English language, linguistics, and TESOL were invited to the interview. Three academics did not reply to the request, one declined it, and only two accepted to participate in the interview. The contacts in the employer population were fewer than in the other two, therefore, only two employers were contacted and both of them agreed to participate.

Table 1 and Table 2 contain the participants' demographic information.

Table 1: Demographic information of interviewed teachers.

Teacher's pseudonym	Gender	Master degree field	English teaching background	Years teaching in Taiwan	Types of employment
Adrián	M	Business Administration	No	1	Cram school
Félix	M	Business Administration	No	2	Cram school, tutoring
Angélica	F	Business Administration	No	3	Cram school, tutoring
Marcos	M	Civil Engineering	No	5	Cram school, online academy, kindergarten, private primary school
Cristina	F	International Studies	No	1	Cram school, kindergarten
Dolores	F	Business Administration	No	2	Cram school
Estela	F	Educational Leadership	Yes	2	Cram school, private high school
Vicente	M	Industrial Engineering	No	4	Cram school, tutoring

Table 2: Demographic information of the experts

Pseudonym	Gender	Nationality	Role	Field
Lola	F	Malaysian	Employer	Law
Iris	F	Taiwanese	Employer	Business Administration
Dr. Cee	M	Taiwanese	Academic	Education
Prof. M	M	Taiwanese	Academic	Linguistics

3.2.1 Foreign English Teachers

When inviting participants in this group, the only two requirements were to have taught English in Taiwan for at least one year and not to hold Taiwanese citizenship. Among the potential participants invited were former and current teachers from different national origins, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Russia, Slovenia, Belize, Colombia, and other Latin American countries; however only participants from Honduras and Nicaragua replied positively to the invitation and scheduled an online interview. They all share Spanish as their first language and English as their second language as well as Mandarin language learning experience. Similarly, among the invitees, there were teachers with different backgrounds and education levels, some of which first moved to Taiwan because they had a job offer to become English teachers. Nonetheless, the teachers who decided to participate were all former international master's students who got said degree with a Taiwan government scholarship. All the teachers, except Cristina, got their first teaching job in Taiwan while they were master's students, therefore, their initial work permit was sponsored by their universities.

The only two teachers who are still in the teaching profession are Marcos and Estela. The other six teachers spent between a few months to a total of two years teaching English full-time after graduation before they found jobs in their fields. Estela is the only teacher who had taught English before arriving in Taiwan and had earned formal credentials as an English teacher in her country.

Marcos is a special case and one of the main inspirations for this research. His story with teaching began just like the rest of the participating teachers. He arrived in Taiwan to study for a master's degree and landed a part-time teaching job as a recommendation from a friend. Unlike the rest of the participants, he completed his studies in South Taiwan and once he graduated, he moved to North Taiwan to work as an English teacher full-time. He is the only teacher without formal teaching credentials who stayed in the teaching profession and achieved a high point in his teaching career. His experience has two perspectives as his first three years of experience were with employers who did not place an importance on training and now, for the past two years, he has been working at a Montessori school where initial teacher training

and continuous professional development are required. Additionally, he has a teaching job at an online academy. Due to the legal restrictions in Taiwan, after his graduation, he has held work permits as a Spanish teacher but teaches English exclusively.

3.2.2 Taiwanese Employers

The two employers interviewed will be referred to as Lola and Iris. They both have similar responsibilities in their roles as academic supervisors. Among their responsibilities are tasks like recruiting, hiring, supervising, and providing feedback to local and foreign teachers. Lola has two years of experience at a big cram school that has several branches across the country and started in her role before graduating with a bachelor's degree in law. Her previous work experience was in sales. Iris has fifteen years of experience at three different types of cram schools in the northern capital of Taipei. She graduated from business administration and has had experience as an English teacher before while practicing her supervising role.

3.2.3 Taiwanese Academics

Two academics accepted my invitation for an interview. One of them, whom I will refer to as Prof. M. is a linguistics professor at the Department of Applied Foreign Languages at a science and technology university similar to a university of applied science in some European contexts. The other one, Dr. Cee. is a former chair of an international master's program in educational leadership, a former executive at the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT), and the current Dean of Student Affairs at a research-oriented university in Taiwan; he currently teaches at the same master's that he helped design. They were both educated in the US and the UK respectively.

3.3 Instruments

The instruments to gather the data from the three groups of participants were three self-designed semi-structured interviews. The interview for teachers was designed to collect information about the participants' demographics, teaching experience, teacher professional development interests based on the five domains of the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs, teachers' views on policies for hiring foreign teachers, and their attitudes toward taking a credit-bearing university-level microcredential. The interviews for employers and academics are based on the interview for teachers, but they focus on the experts' beliefs about foreign teachers, the need for foreign teachers' professional development, the preparedness of the Taiwanese higher education system to provide the proposed microcredential, and Taiwanese universities' role in certifying skills and increasing employability.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Since all the participants live in Taiwan, the interviews took place via online video calls on Zoom. The participants were suggested to turn off their cameras if they felt more comfortable. Most interviewees opted to have their cameras off during the recording time, but some of the participants felt comfortable leaving their cameras on. Once the Zoom meetings were over, two sets of files were generated: an audio file and a video file. The video files were deleted, and all the audio files from the interviews were transcribed using the transcription function in Microsoft Word, and later crosschecked and edited. Manual notes were also taken during the interviews.

3.5 Data Analysis

Since my aim when interviewing the participants was to identify common themes that would help me answer the research questions, the method I chose for the analysis of the data is thematic analysis because it aids in “systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) [...] TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences” (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

After conducting, transcribing, and editing each transcript, a table of codes was generated based on each standard from the five candidate domains of the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs. Codes related to attitudes toward taking the microcredential and the readiness of the Taiwanese higher education system were also created. Given that semi-structured interviews allow for unexpected themes to emerge, the data that fell out of the established codes was coded as experiences and opinions.

Once all the data were coded, the following themes were identified:

1. Teachers’ Experiences
2. Experts’ Opinions
3. Language TESOL Standards (domain 1)
4. Culture TESOL Standards (domain 2)
5. Instruction TESOL Standards (domain 3)
6. Assessment TESOL Standards (domain 4)
7. Professionalism TESOL Standards (domain 5)
8. Teachers’ Attitudes Toward a University Microcredential
9. Universities’ Role in Certifying Skills and Building Employability

3.6 Research Ethics

When piloting the interviews, the informed consent form was piloted as well, and the pilot participants were not familiar with electronic signatures and expressed that it would be inconvenient for them to take extra time to learn to do something they would use only once. Therefore, for the final interviews, the informed consent was done by replying to an email with the following text:

Given the information explained to you in the video call, please reply to this email with "I agree" or "I disagree". If you choose to agree, this is the statement that you agree to: "I have been informed about the circumstances of my participation in the present study and know that I have the right to ask any questions about my participation. I have agreed to the electronic recording of the interview and give my consent to use the data collected anonymously for the exclusive use of the researcher. I reserve the right to terminate my participation at any time in which case the data belonging to my person should be erased immediately."

At the beginning of the interview, the participants were first asked if they agreed to have the call recorded. Later, I explained what the study was about, how I would use their data anonymously only for this thesis, and how I would store and eventually destroy the audio files and transcriptions. Then, they were given the chance to ask questions before starting. Finally, they were sent the above email which they all replied in agreement as soon as the interviews were over.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Teachers' Experiences

Given the versatility of semi-structured interviews and their potential for allowing the participants to expand on their experience as much as they wish, some of the interview questions did not only answer the research questions but gave the foreign English teachers a chance to express matters that are relevant to their roles as teachers and to the employment prospects for foreign citizens in Taiwan.

To understand why there are so many foreign English teachers without formal credentials in Taiwan, we need to understand the Taiwanese market's needs and the country's beliefs about language learning. The best way to approach this is by finding out how seven out of these eight professionals became English teachers. The lack of qualified foreign English teachers and a high market demand for *foreigners* has driven the sector in Taiwan to hire teachers without formal credentials and experience like it has happened in other subject areas in different parts of the world (Chen, 2016; Mukeredzi, 2016; Tuna, 2021). Except for Estela who was already a certified English teacher in her home country, every participant among the teachers group got their very first English teaching job after arriving in Taiwan and did not have any prior experience in the field. From their accounts, their first employers lacked any recruitment strategies and instead relied on employees' recommendations. All teachers in this study were contacted by other English teachers without formal credentials who were leaving their job and recommended the participants to their employers. These referrals were not done based on any professional assessment but on the basis of friendships, meaning that the referees did not have any knowledge of the candidates' teaching skills and experience (or lack thereof). In all these cases, the candidates attended an interview with a supervisor at the school and were informed shortly after that they had been hired without needing to confirm any credentials or give a teaching demonstration.

Another reason so many teachers without formal credentials enter the field in Taiwan is that ELT is very profitable for foreign citizens that meet the language skills and *ethnic standards* set by society and sometimes the government. All participants were motivated to earn an extra income while they were studying despite having a Taiwan government scholarship that covers the basic needs of an international student. The participating teachers expressed that these funds contributed not only to their basic needs but also to entertainment. All participants shared that they used their teaching job income to travel both inside and outside of Taiwan. Two of them traveled as far as Europe. And three of them used their savings to travel to their home countries which tend to be among the most expensive destinations by air. All teachers expressed that they would not have been able to take such trips without their teaching job income. Two of the participants expressed that their income as English teachers helped them save enough funds to support themselves during some months of unemployment. One of the teachers expressed that her salary allowed her to have a more comfortable life and

to afford things she could not afford in her home country.

Taiwan is known for being an expatriates' haven. It is a developed country that enjoys high levels of public safety, a relatively low cost of living, and an excellent and affordable health system. These are privileges that the teachers who accepted to participate in the interview do not have in their home countries. Guaranteeing a job on the island becomes their ticket to a better life, and teaching English is sometimes the only job that is available to them. The proof is that none of the teachers without credentials, except for Estela, was an English teacher in their country. They did not enter the profession with the aim of staying in it, and despite all of them expressing their will to move on to other fields, they all agreed that they would continue teaching if they had not found a job in their preferred field.

Vicente, an industrial engineer, struggled for two years to find a job in his field and considered furthering his career in teaching by opening an online academy with teachers from his home country, but those plans did not materialize after he found full-time employment in his field. Dolores, who continued to work as an English teacher even after graduation because she was for some time unable to get a job in her field of business administration, stated that she entered the teaching profession because "everybody was doing it and it is the most accessible job because of the hours, the money, and there aren't many requirements in some schools." Marcos, a civil engineer by training, has not practiced his profession in five years and most likely will never be able to work in his field in Taiwan due to a lack of Mandarin and Taiwanese Hokkien skills. However, he found a haven in teaching and, like the rest of the teachers without formal credentials, is willing to take a challenging job that he had not been trained to do in order to continue enjoying the privileges he has in Taiwan. Cristina was the only teacher that did not work as one during her studies. She did arrive in Taiwan to pursue a master's degree but did not pursue that additional income all other interviewees were after. She took her first teaching job two years after her master's degree graduation and did it because she was unemployed and knew that she could enter a high-paying profession without fulfilling many requirements.

In line with Aškerc Veniger's (2016) findings, the group of teachers interviewed felt that there is a general need for training of foreign English teachers in Taiwan. All the participating teachers expressed that their employers never offered them any training opportunities. Angélica said she wished that training opportunities had been available when she began teaching because she identified that she had skill gaps that needed to be filled. Adrián expressed that he was not interested in taking such a training course when initially asked because he did not plan to make a long-lasting career in teaching, but did share his ideas of how foreign teachers and Taiwanese students could benefit from such programs. Félix and Cristina felt that their academic workload was heavy enough and would not dedicate a whole semester to a teacher training course, but in the end, they changed their minds after discussing other aspects of the proposed microcredential.

Marcos' present job is the exception as he is part of a team that values teacher training. Based on his current experience, Marcos thought that a course focused on teaching English in Taiwan would help teachers not only build teaching skills but also bridge the cultural gap in the classroom and at the workplace. From his long-lasting career in English teaching, Marcos highlights that training for foreign English teachers in Taiwan should focus on strategies of how to deal with parents and school management who tend to place a lot of pressure on teachers with what he thinks were unrealistic expectations regarding such young students. He did not have any training opportunities for the first three years of his teaching career. However, he pursued a TESOL certificate to be able to apply for his current full-time job at which he receives

continuous professional development centered on the Montessori approach. The most relevant skills that he has gained from his training opportunities are classroom management, delivery of content, teaching techniques, student engagement, reflective practice, and student-centered teaching. He notices that a team of qualified teachers at his current job promotes a higher level of cooperation and teamwork both among teachers and between teachers and the administration. He highlighted that when his team follows the best practices that they have been trained in, the work culture and interaction with students are more relaxed and positive than in his previous jobs despite still being in a traditional Taiwanese setting. He described an environment where solutions to problems are approached as a team. This change from his past work experiences is evidence that cooperative and collaborative teacher training creates solid and successful learning organizations (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Ljubetić & Kostović-Vranješ, 2008).

In synthesis, all the teachers interviewed got their first teaching jobs in Taiwan not because of their credentials or skills, but because having foreign teachers is an obligation that language academies must fulfill in order to stay competitive and keep parents and students satisfied. Since the remuneration for a foreign teacher is above the average local salary and the practice of hiring foreign teachers without formal credentials is well spread and institutionalized, the teachers took the opportunity to venture into a new career, got high earnings from it, and changed their lifestyles. Half of the teachers interviewed had difficulties finding a job in their field and stayed working after graduation for up to two years. Marcos continues to work as an English teacher and has lost all hopes of working in his field in Taiwan. Estela, the only teacher with formal qualifications, is still working as an English teacher and has no plans of changing occupations.

4.1.2 Experts' Opinions

The experts' opinions encompass their ideas about university-level training for foreign teachers, their value for the Taiwanese ELT field, and a general need for training.

On the side of the employers and academics, they shared the opinion that the top universities and research-intensive universities were prepared to offer the proposed microcredential because these institutions have vast experience in terms of internationalization and English medium instruction at the same time that they are well spread across the country and could supply the local communities' demands for qualified English teachers both in urban and rural areas. Dr. Cee shared with me that his university's College of Education had received a substantial grant to be transformed into an English medium instruction college. These funds are part of the aid that universities receive under the Bilingual 2030 Policy and are meant to promote English language education. The implementation of the proposed microcredential is in line with the policy's strategy and supports its final goal.

Regarding the training needs of foreign teachers in Taiwan, Lola stated that, as a recruiter, she has come across applicants who do not possess teaching skills way too often and she is afraid that those candidates are entering the market every day. In the past few years, she has exclusively recruited international students from an education master's degree in which several students are already teachers in their countries, including a considerable number of English teachers, but this is not the case with all employers. Lola is able to recruit these international students because the university near her workplace is the only university in the

country that offers an international education degree program fully taught in English and funded by government scholarships. However, she commented that the effects of COVID-19 on inbound student mobility and the legal restrictions to hire certain nationals make her recruiting tasks very difficult as international students graduate and she cannot keep them employed.

From the very beginning of the interview, Iris said that foreign teachers play an important role in achieving the goals of the Bilingual 2030 policy. Nonetheless, just like Lola, she faces the constraints placed by the Ministry of Education on who is approved for a work permit as a language teacher in supplementary education. Her longest work experience was with a school that has a license to teach Spanish and Russian, which allowed them to get work permits for citizens of Spanish and Russian-speaking countries as teachers of these languages, but in reality, they only taught English. Though illegal on paper, this practice is well-spread among some language academies and cram schools while the authorities turn a blind eye. At this school, where she supervised mainly Latin American and Taiwanese teachers, she developed an opinion that the conditions for getting a work permit should not be the teachers' nationality, but the applicants' language and teaching skills. She said that it would be better if the government set standards in these two domains that could be measured with a comprehensive language test and a teaching certificate so that employers could hire whoever they deemed qualified from a smaller pool of certified candidates. She expressed that her recruiting tasks would be much easier if the government established a platform for certifying candidates' language and teaching skills. She explained that, with such a platform, she would receive applications only from qualified teachers and she could focus on whether the candidate is a good fit for the role without worrying about all the bureaucracy that she faces with the current legislation.

Besides his highly academic profile, Dr. Cee is the father of two young children who attend supplementary English lessons. He expressed that foreign teachers are instrumental to Taiwanese students' acquisition of an international language and to develop intercultural competences that they would otherwise not achieve with local teachers. He shared that the Taiwanese market is aware of this advantage and the demand for foreign teachers can be seen both in urban and rural settings. He also expressed that it is necessary to include these teachers as supplementary workforce in public primary and secondary education institutions as foreign teachers tend to have a broad professional diversity and dynamic teaching approaches while formally qualified local teachers tend to be more traditional and help students succeed in developing test-taking skills. He highlighted the importance of integrating these "new teachers" into the Taiwanese educational system. However, a conversation about integrating foreign teachers into the local workforce cannot take place without discussing the legal implications for their employment.

Regarding the limitations placed by the legislation that allows foreign citizens to apply for work permits to teach their country's official language, Dr. Cee expressed that most employers are open to recruiting teachers from any nationality and hopes that the Ministry of Education will soon align with the market needs and experts' opinions because he stated that schools "cannot recruit qualified English teachers from English-speaking countries" because the human resources are not available. His opinions are discussed in the language TESOL standards (domain 1), and universities' role in certifying skills and building employability sections.

4.1.3 Language TESOL Standards (Domain 1)

The language domain could erroneously be identified as the simplest domain of the TESOL standards. After all, what does an English teacher need in this domain? To be fluent in English, have good pronunciation and a good accent, use a wide range of vocabulary, speak with perfect grammar, and write without spelling mistakes. Nonetheless, English today is a more diverse language than it used to be.

Taiwanese society is generally closed-minded about language learning in general. The legislation that limits international citizens to work as instructors of the language that is official in their country is a conservative reflection of a reality plagued with stereotypes and *native-speakerism*, the erroneous belief that Western native English speakers are the ideal models of the English language and its teaching methodology (Holliday, 2015). It would not be unthinkable to hear Taiwanese criticizing speakers of *non-standard* varieties of English because they do not have the prestigious accent of white North American Hollywood actors. To understand this issue better, the experts' input was invaluable. Here is the account of their interviews relevant to the language domain.

From working in this industry for more than ten years, Iris has developed work relationships and even friendships with foreign teachers of English and has realized that the beliefs about language teaching are plagued with stereotypes and misjudgments. She coincided with Dr. Cee's opinion that "the Taiwanese society holds the stereotype that a language is only spoken correctly by its native speakers," but she went on to say that the Taiwanese public does not like all native English speakers, but mostly only white Americans. Iris goes even further to explain that these beliefs do not apply exclusively to English or foreign languages. There is a prescriptivist approach to language learning that has deep roots in the Taiwanese culture as, in a country that strongly antagonizes the People's Republic of China, the locally printed Mandarin learning books favor grammatical structures used in Beijing rather than the local Taiwanese Mandarin that has developed away from the mainland varieties due to the political separation of both countries and the influence of local languages, especially Taiwanese Hokkien. She explained that the opinion on the island is that "we have some people in Taiwan who cannot even speak Chinese properly."

Lola, in her employer role, expressed that the nationality restrictions by the MOE make her recruiting duties very difficult. Since her school's branch is located in a small city, her entire international workforce consists of teachers whose work permit is sponsored by their Taiwanese spouse or their university in the case of international students. The international side of her team is formed by two full-time non-native English-speaking teachers and a varying number of international students from a nearby university that offers EMI postgraduate degrees in TEFL, linguistics, and education. She explains that in her location, she cannot recruit foreign teachers under the current legislation and that her only option is to resort to these loopholes. Another factor that contributed to her issues in recruiting international staff was the strict migratory restrictions placed by the Taiwanese government in which, according to her words, "for more than two years, there were no tourists or international students coming to Taiwan." During this period, she lost several international students that she had hired because they graduated and, therefore, did not have university-sponsored work permits anymore. She expressed that she would have kept many of her foreign teachers after graduation if the government focused on teaching credentials instead of nationality.

Lola stated that the market demands do not match the market needs. She explained that parents believe that native English speakers have a better command of the language and “a natural ability to teach,” but she argued that most native English-speaking teachers do not have a second language learning experience and cannot empathize or advise students on how to acquire a foreign language. She continued to share her opinion about the legislation regarding the employment of foreign teachers and stated that the Ministry of Education should consult language learning specialists and local academies to reform what she considered an “outdated law.”

She went on to explain that the discrimination against foreign teachers even extends to some native English speakers: “Singaporeans and Filipinos are not even considered for teaching jobs because Taiwanese believe that they don’t speak real English.” On this topic, she concluded that the Taiwan government should end its policy of offering international language instructors work permits to teach only the languages that are official in their countries for two reasons: (1) speakers of non-standard varieties of English promote the use of English as an international language and (2) only second language speakers know the struggles of learning a new language. She also advised that state-funded training opportunities should be given to minority groups such as Creole English speakers and non-native English speakers in order to bring visibility to these teachers and the contributions they can make to the language learning field in Taiwan.

However, I discovered through my interviews that the Taiwanese are not the only ones who discriminate based on language variety. Although it is not a generalized feeling, some of the victims of language discrimination, foreign English teachers, can also be guilty of such conduct. For instance, Félix criticized some teachers’ English variants by saying “They don’t have a good English level. They have a Creole English like an indigenous English, but it’s not like the ‘English English’. I speak better English than them.” Cristina expressed similar views about Belizean teachers’ English saying, “I don’t think that should be the standard accent to teach.” Other teachers did not have such harsh words toward ‘non-standard’ English speakers, but Dolores shared an example of some nationalities that are usually discriminated against when applying for an English teacher position. She told me that she knew that Irish and Australian applicants tend to be rejected for these jobs. She did not criticize those nationals’ varieties of English but said that it is even difficult for proficient English speakers to understand these variants and that such nationals could be good English teachers if they modulate their speech to make it clear for students.

Opinions like these are evidence that a change regarding language stereotypes and discrimination must happen not only on the side of Taiwanese but also on the side of foreign residents. This dichotomy, and to some extent tensions, between native and non-native English-speaking teachers could be reduced by introducing certified teaching credentials that guarantee the participants’ language proficiency. A microcredential that targets the language domain from the perspectives of World Englishes (Kachru, 1992) and English as an international language could help drive these necessary changes to integrate more *alternative English* speakers into the language teaching field to enrich it. At the same time, speakers of these varieties can serve as role models for local learners, since they can share their strategies to communicate in international contexts where their language varieties are not common. In the long term, this would increase the acceptance of language variety and diversity among teachers, employers, and the Taiwanese public.

Another aspect of this domain is language proficiency. The Taiwanese government has addressed this domain in a very simplistic way: *show me your passport*. However, as I argued in my previous thesis, citizenship is not a reliable measure of language proficiency (Úbeda Montenegro, 2020, p. 10). Without going into too many details, in a globalized and diverse world like today's, millions of citizens do not speak the language that is mostly associated with their country. Some examples of such countries are the USA, Canada, Mexico, Belgium, and India, among others. Therefore, other approaches should be established. The most prestigious TESOL certificates make a distinction between native and non-native English speakers and require those who are not to present a language test before enrolling in their program. This approach would not be far from plausible in Taiwan. If the nationality restriction were lifted and the work permit was linked to the proposed microcredential, the Taiwanese universities could certify the teacher's English language proficiency by having the candidate present evidence of having studied the entirety of their high school or any higher education degrees in a territory and institution⁴ where English is the language of instruction, or present the results from an English test. This approach would not be impossible in the reality of Taiwan for two reasons: (1) All English teachers, except international students with a work permit sponsored by their university, must have a bachelor's degree in any field. Hence, if the degree or high school education was in English, the candidate has fulfilled the language proficiency requirement. (2) Most non-native English-speaking teachers are international degree students who presented an English test to get admitted to their program. These candidates could submit those tests to be admitted into the proposed microcredential. All the interviewees, including teachers, employers, and academics favored this approach to proving language proficiency.

Every participant had strong opinions about the Ministry of Education's law for English teachers. The most vocal were the teachers interviewed. They all come from Spanish-speaking countries, and it could be assumed that subjectivity plays a role in their dislike for the legislation that limits teachers' access to an English teaching work permit. Nevertheless, they are all highly competent L2 English speakers who mostly acquired their language skills from other L2 speakers. Therefore, their disagreement with this legislation cannot be taken as simple resentment against the system.

During their interviews, the teachers voiced their opinion about the nationality requirements for language teachers. Adrián's view regarding the privileges that native English speakers enjoy is the mildest. He stated that he does not mind the strategy of recruiting these teachers since he thought that those candidates bring diversity to the island, but he disagrees with the exclusion of other nationalities because he considers this requirement irrelevant to measure language, teaching, and professional skills. He went on to say that the situation was unfair to the international students who choose to continue in the teaching profession after their student work permit rights end. Félix has become discontented with some teachers from English-speaking countries. According to him, "there are people way more qualified with a better teaching attitude". Cristina said that she knew people from different nationalities that "actually studied to be an English teacher and I would say that they are more prepared than [a native speaker] who never studied the language and cannot answer [when a student asks] why this is this way." Both Félix and Cristina suggested that instructors' language proficiency should be evaluated through tests. Angélica expressed that legislations like the one that is currently active for foreign language teachers create discrimination based on race and skin color since the most highly sought-after teachers in Taiwan are white Americans, and this creates a false idealization of foreign English teachers. Vicente described that the work permit

⁴ For example, a candidate who studied in a French medium instruction institution in Quebec, Canada would need to present an English test.

legislation has created a wave of unqualified native English-speaking teachers that secure a job to support their travel and tourism in Asia and keep qualified non-native English-speaking teachers from working legally in Taiwan. He also expressed that these teachers tend to have a so-called neutral accent and that students could instead benefit from interacting with qualified teachers that speak different variants of English. Marcos, who has the most experience in teaching English in Taiwan and has dealt with the constraints of the Taiwanese law for the longest, thinks that the nationality restriction is counterproductive to the development of education in the country because it glorifies candidates whose only advantage is their language skills, and this glorification creates a population of teachers who believe that teacher training does not apply to them. Hence, they become entitled and uninformed education practitioners with no L2 learning experience, lacking empathy for their students' learning processes. Besides, Marcos highlighted that favoring white native English speakers limited students' exposure to alternative varieties of English, some of which are very predominant in the regions around Taiwan such as Indian, Singaporean, and Filipino English. This reflection echoes the ones made by Christiansen (2022) in which he advocates for not discriminating against teachers based on their nationality because students will end up lacking exposure to alternative varieties.

In the context of Taiwan, language proficiency is measured by the speaker's nationality. Therefore, the questions about the Foreign English Teacher Program (FETP) and how it could be adapted to benefit all nationalities belong to the language domain of the TESOL standards. Here are the participants' opinions:

Adrián mentioned that he is not against the financial incentives given to newly recruited teachers in the FETP program, but he would like to see those benefits extended to all other nationalities not only to recruit teachers from abroad but to extend it to foreign teachers who are already in Taiwan; he thought that there were already several foreign teachers in Taiwan and such approach might be financially more efficient. Félix understands that if the FETP did not offer such benefits, Taiwan would not be as much of an interesting destination for the candidates, but agreed that these opportunities should be open to applicants from all nationalities both living in Taiwan or abroad as long as they can demonstrate good language skills and teaching attitudes. Angélica considers that the funds for such a limited program are too high and that the resources could be better spent on training foreign teachers who are already practicing the profession in Taiwan and have demonstrated their commitment to it. She highlighted the need for training these teachers without formal credentials in the areas of educational psychology and educational technology. Cristina said that she would suggest that the FETP benefits be exclusive for teachers that are already working in Taiwan and that the funds that are currently allocated to flight reimbursement and housing can be spent on training foreign teachers that have demonstrated a commitment to the teaching field in Taiwan despite being native English speakers or not. Marcos shared that he has heard of instances in which native English-speaking teachers with strong accents, such as Irish English and Australian English speakers had been rejected for jobs because they could not fake an American accent. Hence, his opinion was that, despite the recent inclusion of all English-speaking nationalities in the FETP, only people with an American-like accent were considered for those jobs and that there was a missed opportunity for diversity in teaching and learning in Taiwan. Dolores expressed that the recruitment of foreign teachers and the regulation regarding getting a language teaching work permit should not be associated with nationality but with skills, and that benefits like the funds available for teacher training should be provided to candidates that have shown good attitudes and commitment toward teaching. Despite being an experienced English teacher with a bachelor's degree in language teaching, Estela does not have the nationality to work with the FETP but has close friends who have been recruited by that

program. From those friends, she has heard accounts that local teachers who work alongside foreign teachers in the FETP consider that the latter are overpaid and overrated. Local teachers feel undervalued because they are forced to be coached by outsiders with less experience and knowledge about the local content. They also resent that FETP teachers have all the autonomy to make their own decisions while they must follow strict guidelines.

One addition to the language domain is that a teacher should ideally have a certain knowledge of the students' L1 to be able to predict questions and issues in learning. This idea was brought up by Iris, Dr. Cee, and Prof. M. On the side of the teachers, Angélica shared that learning how Mandarin works helped her understand her students' thinking better. Since every resident of Taiwan is exposed to the Mandarin language every day and each teacher has a different level of proficiency in the language, the microcredential does not need to possess a dedicated unit for learning Chinese but instead could have explicit language teaching that relates to issues in learning English. This part of the training should be no challenge to design or teach because the curriculum developers and the trainers will be Chinese L1 speakers.

4.1.4 Culture TESOL Standards (Domain 2)

An aspect that has always been linked to language learning is the native speakers' culture. In all language learning experiences, culture plays a key role. It would be impossible to imagine a French course that does not include content related to the fashion industry or French cuisine, a Spanish course without traditions like Flamenco or *tapas*, and a Korean course without explicit teaching of how younger and older people behave toward each other in Korean society. Even in learning dead tongues like Classical Latin and Greek, learning about ancient cultures is embedded in their teaching. Until not long ago, it would be unthinkable to open an English-learning book that would not contain topics related to the culture of the most well-known English-speaking countries like the US, the UK, and Australia. However, with the role of English as an international language nowadays, English language learning materials contain cultural topics related to all corners of the world. In the 21st century, English learners use the language to communicate with other language learners, therefore, developing cultural competencies relevant to their own and each other's culture is more relevant than becoming competent in English-speaking people's cultures.

The culture domain does not limit itself to teaching one's culture or to including cultural aspects in the teaching practice, but it would help the microcredential participants to develop intercultural competence. This aspect is particularly relevant to foreign English teachers in Taiwan as most of them had never encountered East Asian cultures before. In the case of this study's participants, all eight teachers shared that they arrived in Taiwan thanks to a generous government scholarship and knew next to nothing about the local culture and traditions. Their main motivation was that the Taiwan scholarships enjoyed a high degree of prestige and reputation in their home countries as they used to benefit more individuals than other government scholarships in their countries like Fulbright, Chevening, or Erasmus Mundus.

One aspect that all teachers have agreed on is that their jobs as English teachers have contributed to their understanding of Taiwanese culture and society. They highlight that, when they were students, their interactions were limited to university communities. For some of them, the first meaningful interaction with locals was after accepting their first teaching job. They all expressed that teaching gave them a unique opportunity to interact with managers,

administrators, students, and parents. Among the aspects they mentioned are that (1) they learned about the education culture, customs, and expectations that primary and secondary students have to meet before their schools and family, and how such high demands shape their mentality and personality as adults, and that (2) they further developed their Mandarin skills from interactions with students.

One side of the culture that Cristina learned in her role as a teacher was that the parents trusted the school with some duties that they could not fulfill themselves, such as feeding the students two to three meals per day and caring for some of the children until nighttime when parents were off from work and could finally pick their children up. She contrasted this with her school experience in her home country where her parents packed her lunch every day and picked her up in the afternoon. She described that the workplace demands of Taiwanese society prevent parents from dedicating the necessary time to their children.

Estela shared that before working as an English teacher in Taiwan, she was quick to judge locals' attitudes and actions, but working in a Taiwanese setting made her more open-minded and now she thinks about locals' backgrounds before judging them. Vicente had a very active extracurricular and social life during his two years of study and his two years as a full-time teacher after graduation. During these four years, he had a very diverse network that included many locals; however, he confirms that aspects related to pressures that Taiwanese students, teachers, and parents face can only be learned by working in the teaching industry.

All the teachers interviewed shared that they discovered a side of the Taiwanese culture that they ignored before they started teaching. Some of them, like Angélica, were even faced with realities they ignored. She expressed that she learned that "based on how their language is, their thinking pattern is very different." These experiences reveal the potential for meeting the culture domain's TESOL standards, so that trainees can share culture-related experiences with locals and peers to learn to share aspects about their culture in a language classroom setting, embrace others' cultures into their teaching and adjust their approaches to be culturally appropriate in their interactions with students, parents, administration, and colleagues.

Other stakeholders also support this claim. Lola said that one of the unique features brought to the Taiwanese language learning field by foreign teachers was diversity. She describes Taiwan as an isolated island with a very homogeneous society in which most students would not get the chance to interact with the outside world if it were not for the presence of foreign teachers in the country. When she recruits foreign teachers, she looks for candidates who are willing to share their background and culture with students while the students learn to use English as an international language to connect with people from around the world. A microcredential that follows the culture domain of the TESOL standards would train teachers to use their and their students' cultures as a tool for learning. This would enable the teachers to teach students aspects of other cultures without neglecting the language learning aspect. In other words, following the standards for this domain does not mean encouraging teachers to lecture students about culture. As a matter of fact, reducing teacher talk time is a challenge that language teaching practitioners face daily. Instead, the goal is to have teachers use cultural aspects as content for a lesson that will develop both linguistic and intercultural skills.

Prof. M. stated that every teacher, regardless of their nationality or the type of institution that employed them, should have a genuine interest in the local traditions to be able to connect with students in meaningful ways. One of the undergraduate courses that he teaches is called Taiwanese Festivals and Cultures in which students can quickly develop their language skills because they have a solid knowledge of the content, which increases their confidence when

performing in class. Traditional festivals in Taiwan are based on ancient mythological stories, which allow for storytelling, presentation activities, conversation, and discussion. These festivals are holidays observed by most Taiwanese; therefore, local students are highly familiar with them. At the same time, introducing these aspects of the culture helps foreign teachers to understand Taiwanese traditions and social norms, so there is both personal and professional growth for teachers.

Other stakeholders were a little bit more critical about the cultural component and went beyond the classroom setting. Iris spoke from her experience leading foreign teachers for over a decade and shared that there should be an emphasis on Taiwanese work culture as the lack of knowledge of this aspect from the teachers' side leads to conflicts and arguments that foreign teachers might not expect and that not all employers may be ready to handle. Some of these conflicts may be related to work schedules, leaves of absence, overtime pay, vacation time and holidays, and some other unspoken assumptions regarding each side's responsibilities and duties. This idea is shared by Dr. Cee who said that foreign teachers should be knowledgeable about Taiwanese parents' expectations as well as the management and leadership style of local schools in order to be successful in their teaching career in Taiwan and avoid unexpected culture shock.

In conclusion, there is no doubt about the rich cultural baggage that any foreign English teacher brings to Taiwan. However, as attested by our participating teachers, there were aspects of the Taiwanese culture that they had not gotten to know until they worked as English teachers. This encounter with Taiwanese culture was not only a learning experience for these teachers but also an empathetic understanding that they would have not developed otherwise. On the side of the experts, the emphasis was not only on teachers sharing their culture but on learning about the different aspects of the Taiwanese culture to be successful in their interaction with students and the work team. When developing this section of the microcredential, all stakeholders should be involved because, as was seen in the participants' answers, there are different approaches to culture, and they are all valid. However, there needs to be a consensus on what will help the microcredential candidates meet the culture standards that help them connect culture to language and learning.

4.1.5 Instruction TESOL Standards (Domain 3)

The domain that seems the most obvious one to include in teacher training is instruction. This is the area in which teachers most explicitly showed interest. A lot of the questions about challenges in the teachers' practice led to the need for training in this regard. From their accounts, I could see that they did not have a very active role in content selection or much support in terms of instruction. Most teachers did not have the chance to choose what to teach as they were assigned books and curricula that they had to follow. During the interviews, they admitted that they had never thought about their potential as curriculum developers but found the idea interesting. In the case of Cristina, she had to follow a curriculum set by the school and she said that every time she wanted to add extra content, management would not oppose; she expressed that she did not know if the extra content was age-appropriate but followed her belief in students' capacities to achieve the goals. A teacher with a strong desire to implement new approaches like Cristina could benefit from receiving training regarding content development and curriculum design; both of which are linked to the instruction domain.

Despite viewing her one-year teaching experience as overall positive, Cristina also said that her teaching job was stressful and demanding; she tended to spend a lot of time preparing for her lessons and felt particularly anxious about losing the students' attention. She mentioned challenges like dealing with students with learning disabilities without any support from professionals with the relevant training to help these students. Dolores expressed that during her teaching experience, she struggled with voice strain from speaking loudly and constantly. Vicente highlighted that the demands of a teaching job are higher and expressed that working only 15 hours per week felt like a 40-hour-per-week job. Even though these issues may have deeper roots than it is apparent, teacher training focused on effective instruction could help the teachers reduce their talk and instruction time and improve their classroom management techniques which would reduce the stress they face while interacting with students.

Evidence of the need for training in the domain of instruction is that most interviewed teachers relied on a small number of strategies, such as rule memorization, language drills (repetition), children's songs, and reading aloud instead of more effective techniques that promote spontaneous speech. This use of traditional methods by teachers without formal credentials is expected as Chien (2019) described. From the questions regarding how they taught language skills and subskills, it can be observed that teachers stick to traditional methods and deductive teaching, and most of them did not mention any inductive and communicative teaching approaches. One of the participants went as far as sharing that, in her first job, her role was to have the students repeat the lesson they had already learned with a local teacher, lacking any meaningful learning activities. This reflects Dziubinski's (2015) description of how a lack of skills in lesson planning and activity design results in busy sessions without any effective learning.

Participants expressed agreement with most of the training aspects related to instruction. Among their challenges were: keeping the students engaged and motivated, making instructions easy for students to understand, and classroom management/discipline. However, they do not see the need for a student-centered approach; for them, it is more important that students are quiet when the teacher speaks. Some aspects of instruction were not appreciated by all teachers. For example, integrating technology in the classroom was not a priority for Adrián and Félix; this may be due to a lack of awareness of how the use of ICTs facilitates instruction and contributes to students' learning and engagement.

None of the teachers interviewed was aware of how to help students identify resources for learning English outside of the classroom. In the case of Marcos, despite his advanced training compared to other participants, he did not know how to play a role in supporting students' autonomous learning outside of class-related activities and work. Given that he has already given up on finding employment in civil engineering, Marcos took an online TESOL certificate, that despite not being one of the most prestigious ones that I have mentioned in Chapter 2, helped him obtain a job at a school where he receives continuous training in the Montessori method. When asked about issues related to instruction and student engagement, he expressed that those issues were present in his past jobs and attributed the reduction of these issues to the students' advanced proficiency at his current school. Evidently, Marcos's teaching performance has increased exponentially since he gained access to teacher training opportunities just like the theory would support this idea (Cheetham & Chivers, 1996; Ljubetić & Kostović-Vranješ, 2008); however, it seemed that he was still unaware of the critical role that the high level of teacher training he has received had an impact on his teaching practice at his current job. He also has not yet realized that the improvement of his teaching skills influences his classroom management skills. While sharing his experience, he showed to have

a high level of confidence in his innate classroom management and discipline skills. This lack of awareness of the effect of teacher training on his practice informs me of the need to include a highly reflective practice component in my proposed teacher training program.

4.1.6 Assessment TESOL Standards (Domain 4)

Despite being key to measuring students' performance and success, none of the teachers had any experience designing assessment. Most of them did not go beyond checking students' workbooks or the tests given to them by their schools. When going further into the topic during his interview, Félix showed interest in learning how to plan and design assessment. He expressed that his role as a teacher was limited to instruction, and he wished he had had the chance to assess students' progress. The lack of information provided by the teachers is evidence that the assessment domain should be emphasized in the proposed microcredential.

Just like in the majority of fields in the realm of teaching, the domain of assessment is the one in which our participating teachers need the most support. Since our teachers' assessment duties do not go beyond checking students' mechanical homework or traditional quizzes and tests, a special emphasis should be placed on this domain, because, unlike some other aspects of their practice, they did not develop any skill related to assessment in their teaching jobs. This domain has two standards. In the first one, assessment theory, teachers should be introduced to the purposes and types of assessment so that they are able to know when, how, and why to assess their students' performance. The second standard, assessment practices, focuses on performance-based assessment, criterion-referenced assessment, and self and peer assessment.

4.1.7 Professionalism TESOL Standards (Domain 5)

The domain of professionalism in the TESOL standards aims to give teachers the tools to identify the resources they have available in their team and their whole environment. When a teacher training course follows the professionalism standards, teachers are trained to work in teams, cooperate with other teachers, identify their team members' strengths to seek advice or help, give and receive feedback about others' and own teaching performance, and stay updated in terms of professional development. In the following paragraphs, the teachers' experience in this domain is described and the need for strengthening this domain is evidenced.

Almost all the teachers expressed that they have not had any teacher training opportunities at their workplace, nor have they procured the opportunities themselves, except for Marcos who took an online TESOL certificate to qualify for a better-paying job. In the case of Cristina, the only participant that started her teaching career after graduation, expressed that she was expecting some form of initial teacher training because her employer (a kindergarten/preschool) was well aware that she had no teaching experience or training in the field. Besides, she expressed her anxiety and fears about working with such young learners. Nonetheless, the guidance that she received did not meet her expectations. She attributed this lack of professional development opportunities to the fact that neither the owners of the school nor her supervisors were trained in the education field themselves.

Regarding cooperation and collaboration at work, most participants expressed that they did not seek advice from work colleagues but instead from the friends who referred them for their jobs. Félix worked for an agency that would send him to different schools on different days. He said that he had some issues at some of these schools that resulted in complaints against him, but instead of receiving training or coaching from his employer, he had to find out by himself how to improve his practice and avoid any future complaints. Angélica, who worked for the same agent as Félix, shared that she did not have anyone to consult with if she had issues at work and that she did not interact with her work colleagues. All other teachers expressed that they could not count on their work colleagues or administrators for advice on how to improve their teaching techniques. Vicente shared that instead of learning from colleagues in the field, he learned about activities, games, and class management from a soccer coach that worked with young children.

Some teachers shared that lack of experience and lack of communication with work colleagues made the job challenging, time-consuming, and stressful. Adrián, my first interviewee, confessed that he felt something comparable to stage fright every time he went to work due to a lack of preparation and training. He didn't know what he had to teach until half an hour before the class; therefore, he could not prepare at home but had to arrive at the school early to plan his lessons. Félix expressed that the nature of his job with the agent that assigned him to different schools daily created stress due to the different managerial and leadership styles at different cram schools. Allowing these teachers to access training that emphasizes professionalism is akin to metacognition and it creates a strong learning organization, for they will improve their teaching by exercising reflective practice, cooperative teaching, and continuous teacher development at the time that their confidence in their skills increases. Teachers will also learn good habits, like planning their lessons on time, which will help teachers prepare for and predict students' struggles. Regarding this domain, the interviewed teachers shared very personal stories that are the result of the long-standing practice of hiring English teachers without formal credentials and not offering them the support they evidently need due to their unrelated professional backgrounds.

Among the participants, there was a general agreement with the interview questions related to the professional domain of the TESOL standards. Even those teachers who taught English in Taiwan for shorter periods of time as part-time teachers agreed that avoiding teacher burnout was one skill that they wish they had received training on. This is especially true for Marcos whose motivation to pursue his TESOL certificate was to leave a job in which he faced strong pressures from management and parents.

4.1.8 Attitudes Toward a University Microcredential

Despite some of the teachers' initial reluctance to take the proposed microcredential, when factors such as receiving credits toward their degree were brought up, they said (except Marcos who studied civil engineering) that they would take the course if it meant that they would also fulfill their curriculum's requirements through the course. Vicente, although having an engineering background, was the one who showed the most interest in receiving teacher training even if he did not receive the benefits of a university microcredential. Estela expressed that such a course is necessary, but she would not agree to have a university administer it since universities do not tend to focus on skill development and instead focus on academic work and theory. Despite not being a generalized opinion, emphasizing the practical approach of a

microcredential might be necessary when publicizing such courses. Receiving a microcredential certificate also made the training more interesting for all participants. Dolores said, “almost all [international] students will be interested [in taking the course] if they receive a certificate that will become an advantage when applying for a job.” The thoughts on how universities could certify teachers’ skills are discussed in the next section.

One of the questions in the teachers’ interviews asked them if they would have been willing to take the microcredential if its credits counted toward their degree, and seven out of eight said yes. However, almost all participants said that there were no culture-related courses in their curriculum that could be substituted by a course in teacher training. They did, however, have mandatory extracurricular activities related to Mandarin language learning and Taiwanese culture. These extracurricular activities could be fulfilled by taking this course, which not only would immerse candidates in a relevant aspect of Taiwanese culture but would also prepare them for an occupation they are most likely to pursue even without any teacher training.

When focusing on specific details about where the microcredential would be offered, the teachers generally trusted the university where they got their master’s degree. They also said that they would also explore the possibility of taking it online from a reputed university. Academics said that research-oriented public universities and high-performing private universities would be the ideal institutions to offer the microcredential. Employers were a little more reserved about the involvement of universities. Lola said that a multi-disciplinary collaboration between the departments of language and education was needed to design a good teacher training program at Taiwanese universities.

Contrary to the other three experts, Iris did not trust the local higher education system to meet the demands and expectations of a training program for foreign teachers. She reacted skeptically to my university microcredential proposal because she expressed that local universities train teachers in traditional methods of teaching and lack the experience to train teachers in a way that would align with the expectations of dynamic and engaging techniques that the local market has regarding foreign teachers. She suggested that if this microcredential were to be offered at a Taiwanese university, the usual lecturers at the academic units would not be the ideal instructors for this program. Instead, she suggested that the instructors be English teachers with at least five years of experience that have been trained not only on how to teach English but also on how to train other teachers. She said that university lectures show student teachers what the theory says but not how that theory works in practice; therefore, she would suggest hiring staff that can unite these two aspects in their training delivery. She went further by saying that the participants of the microcredential must get teaching practice in Taiwanese language academies, cram schools, or primary and secondary schools under the supervision of an experienced teacher as part of their training.

4.1.9 Universities’ Role in Certifying Skills and Building Employability

It is impossible to conduct a study about foreign teachers in Taiwan without accounting for their perceived value in Taiwanese society, which is not currently placed on the teachers’ training and experience, but on subjective criteria.

During their interviews, all teachers expressed that the main reason that they got their jobs is because they were foreigners and, in some cases, they were required to lie to the students

and parents about their nationality, so they were perceived as native English speakers. When asked if they felt valued beyond these two aspects, most expressed that they did not. Two of them expressed that they felt valued for their performance at work, but that their presumed nationality and language background was inseparable from this assessment. Angélica answered this question by saying that her employers made her feel more like a babysitter than a teacher because she was told to do anything in class as long as she kept the students entertained and busy. Cristina expressed that feedback given by one of her administrators made her feel uncomfortable because she was told, “look pretty and smile so that the parents feel comfortable to leave their kids [with you].” Dolores shared that at her first job, she was hired only due to the demands of students’ parents for a foreign teacher, and at her second job, she felt that she would have not been hired if her employer had found a native English speaker to fill the position. She described that any native English speaker in Taiwan, especially someone with fair skin and a North American accent, can walk into a cram school unannounced and leave with a job offer; she thought that the situation is unfair for those who are trained to teach or at least have a natural talent for it. Estela described that she felt like an outsider in her own school. Even though she works there full-time now, she is the only international staff, therefore, she is not integrated into any meetings or activities. She even ignores whether local teachers receive training or any kind of support. These teachers’ experiences regarding their perceived value by the local stakeholders echo the perceptions of the participants of my previous thesis on non-native English-speaking teachers in which foreign teachers are compared to “imported products with specific desirable appearances” (Úbeda Montenegro, 2020, p. 29). Unfortunately, these characteristics that the Taiwanese market seeks in foreign English teachers do not align with the role of a language teacher, and the current legislation is helping reinforce these stereotypes. In this section, I discuss how a university microcredential could help end this trend and adopt policies that would promote the development of the language teaching field in Taiwan and certify teachers’ competence through a university microcredential.

When asked about the lack of formal training opportunities for foreign teachers, Dr. Cee said that he would advise the minister of education to “open the door for international students to access teacher preparation courses while they are pursuing their degree.” He explained that local students, regardless of their field of study, can take courses that lead to a national teacher certification. Local students can even combine their major and their teaching preparation credits to achieve the certification and increase their employment options once they graduate. Recently, the College of Education at Dr. Cee’s university has been designated as an English medium instruction college by the Ministry of Education and has received a grant to make curricular changes to offer more courses in English. He sees this as a first step to include international students in teacher preparation courses. If these students are permitted to take these courses, they will gain a sound understanding of the Taiwanese “curriculum, instruction, leadership, teachers’ organizations and even parents’ expectations.” Dr. Cee closed his interview by expressing his wish for a change in the legislation to allow qualified teachers of all nationalities to compete fairly in a market where they will be valued for their skills and credentials instead of their national origin.

Given that Taiwanese universities already have the experience of preparing local students in any field to become certified teachers, Dr. Cee stated that the higher education system has the capability of also certifying international students as teachers while offering candidates credits toward their degree and a microcredential badge. He clarified that the Ministry of Education has basic standards for Taiwanese citizens who would like to become English teachers as well as requirements for foreign citizens who extraordinarily participate in language teaching programs in local primary and secondary schools. Among the requirements

for NESTs who access the formal education sector, mainly via the FETP, is having a TESOL certificate. A potential microcredential that meets the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs would meet the existing requirements and expectations for foreign teachers. Currently, available TESOL certificates meet the market, school administration, parents, and students' expectations regarding foreign teachers, but not all training programs meet the quality standards of the TESOL International Association. Having a locally designed and delivered microcredential would guarantee the quality of the program.

Dr. Cee also clarified that he thinks that his government should give international students the chance to take the same teacher preparation program that is currently only available for domestic students so that the public education system could benefit from the diversity brought about by foreign teachers.

4.2 Summary and Discussion

4.2.1 Teachers' Experiences

From the teachers' experiences, it can be determined that there are several reasons for having a market crowded with teachers without formal credentials. The first reason is that there exists a market demand for foreign teachers, especially NESTs; therefore, language academies need to hire these teachers to stay competitive and in business. The second reason is that there is a lack of qualified foreign teachers on the island. Given that the legislations of Taiwan are too restrictive to access the formal education sector and too lenient to access the informal sector, the island does not attract certified teachers and becomes a magnet for unqualified professionals. The third reason is that employers do not see the value of investing in TPD and sometimes employers themselves do not have a background in education.

There are also reasons why Taiwan is so attractive for these teachers. Expatriates in Taiwan usually enjoy higher standards of living than in their own countries due to the island's low cost of living, high level of public safety, and universal healthcare system. Depending on their nationality and ethnic background, foreign citizens who work as English teachers get paid much more than local teachers. The last reason foreign citizens stay working in Taiwan as teachers is that they have difficulty finding jobs in other fields.

4.2.2 Experts' Opinions

To summarize the experts' general opinions about the training needs of foreign teachers, we can see that most of them, except for Iris, trusted that Taiwanese universities were prepared to teach a localized microcredential akin to a TESOL certificate, and they said that this could happen at the top universities for three main reasons: (1) All these universities are evenly spread throughout the country, (2) have a higher number of international students, and (3) have experience with English medium instruction. One interesting finding is that the experts were cautious about the skills of the teaching staff of either the Department of Foreign Language or the Department of Education. However, they all seemed to ignore an academic unit that may be more relevant to this microcredential would be the TESOL/TEFL departments which tend

to offer both undergraduate and graduate education.

All four experts agreed that foreign English teachers should be offered teacher training since they are viewed as an important element in the ELF field in Taiwan, but they all agree that these teachers lack professional skills. Dr. Cee added that it is already a tradition in Taiwanese universities to offer teacher training to all students; therefore, there is already a template to follow when designing teacher training for international students. Finally, all four professionals agreed that a change in legislation is necessary to introduce teaching credentials as employment requirements instead of the discriminatory law that qualifies teachers based on nationality.

4.2.3 Language TESOL Standards (Domain 1)

In the language domain, we can attest that the participating teachers all have a good command of the English language. As former international students in Taiwan, they all took standardized English tests and studied in English for at least two years. Therefore, their language proficiency should not be a concern. However, only Estela has received formal training in the structure and components of language such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. As learners of English, they have received more explicit instruction on these aspects, but from listening to the challenges they mentioned in their teaching practice, it can be seen that they could all benefit from basic linguistic content; this could be combined with structures and components of the Chinese language to prepare teachers to anticipate and understand local students' struggles. Regarding the role of language in society and of English in the world today, it could be observed that some teachers and all experts understand the international, multicultural, and diverse nature of English. However, some of the teachers do not have this view and still believe in the superiority of standard varieties that they adhere to, and they feel as entitled to exercising the teaching profession as those who are given the advantage in the law. Hence, there is a strong need to educate English teachers in the richness and variety of World Englishes (Kachru, 1992). In the end, having a well-educated community of teachers in this domain can help break the stereotypes that society holds and change the nationality restrictions to legal work as a language teacher.

4.2.4 Culture TESOL Standards (Domain 2)

There is no doubt of the rich cultural baggage that any foreign English teacher brings to Taiwan. However, as attested by our participating teachers, there were aspects of the Taiwanese culture that they had not gotten to know until they worked as English teachers. This encounter with Taiwanese culture was not only a learning experience for these teachers but also an empathetic understanding that they would have not developed otherwise. On the side of the experts, the emphasis was not only on teachers sharing their culture but on learning about the different aspects of the Taiwanese culture to be successful in their interaction with students and colleagues. When developing this section of the microcredential, all stakeholders should be involved because, as was seen in the participants' answers, there are different approaches to culture, and they are all valid. However, there needs to be a consensus on what will help the microcredential candidates meet the culture standard that helps them connect culture to

language and learning.

4.2.5 Instruction TESOL Standards (Domain 3)

The domain of instruction is one where teachers realized they had the most struggles as they expressed this was the most challenging aspect of their teaching practice. During the interviews, the questions related to this domain were the ones where teachers had more information to share and where they expressed the highest number of needs. The standards in which teachers showed more interest in receiving training were planning and implementing instruction. The teachers lacked the knowledge to make students' needs assessment, they did not have the autonomy to choose the content of their lessons in favor of authentic language use, they had trouble integrating language skills in their activities, and ignored how to conduct formative and summative assessments. The experiences with planning lessons were all too varied. From teachers that would not know what to teach until they arrived at work and had to prepare in a rush, to others that never received support from their school's leadership and saw themselves preparing for their lessons for long hours every week. Overall, every teacher expressed some sort of negative feeling during their lessons. Some of those feelings came from being underprepared and others came from designing lessons that were too busy on the teachers' side, resulting in voice strain and fatigue. Regarding the third standard of using instruction resources, teachers generally were not ready to select materials due to strict policies regarding using the book provided by their school. Most of them did not use technology as a resource in their teaching.

4.2.6 Assessment TESOL Standards (Domain 4)

Given the nature of how language is acquired, a microcredential for foreign teachers without formal qualifications should teach them how to design activities that reflect real-life use of the language and how to support students' guided and independent practice to achieve the learning outcomes. Our microcredential candidates must be aware that formative assessment can and ideally should take place every day in the classroom, that it should not be a task that represents an extra burden to the teacher, and that it is necessary to set the pace and continuity of the curriculum.

Another aspect to focus on in assessment is the design and use of rubrics and checklists. This should help teachers reflect on what they are assessing and whether their instruction is aligned with their assessment. A great way to practice assessment in a microcredential like this is to have instructors and peers observe the participants' teaching practice and then give feedback to each other. This way, teachers get a chance to design and use rubrics or checklists and practice feedback techniques.

4.2.7 Professionalism TESOL Standards (Domain 5)

The domain of professionalism has two standards. Professional Learning and Growth,

and Professional Ethics and Behavior. From our participants' data provided on this domain, I realized that the focus should be on the first standard, and I propose that professionalism standard 2 be addressed not only from the professionalism domain but also from the culture domain as this approach would be more relevant to a microcredential designed specifically for Taiwan.

Standard 1 prepares teachers to become reflective practitioners who will be able to design action plans to overcome teaching and learning issues and will seek professional growth opportunities. Out of all the standards in all five domains, this is the most challenging one. The reason is that, while participants are working toward the microcredential, they will be provided with tools and platforms to achieve this goal, but then they will join (or rejoin if they have already been teaching) an organization in which they will not be treated like professionals and more like a replaceable employee. Taiwanese employers already invest higher quantities of financial resources to pay a foreign teacher's salary; therefore, there should be an investment in the human resource part to ensure that their teachers become an asset to the school. This investment will require a high degree of involvement in the microcredential curriculum development and instruction. Standard 2 must be developed not only in the professionalism domain but also in the culture domain as professional and ethical behavior is culture-bound.

Unfortunately, outside of the formal sector of education, language academies and cram schools are not run by education or language learning professionals. English learning has become a profitable business in the island in which enrolling and keeping paying customers has become more important than student achievement. Therefore, there will be no long-term solution to the professionalization of the foreign teacher community without the professionalization of employers. To guarantee the microcredential's success, local language academy supervisors need to participate as trainees of the microcredential as well as examiners and evaluators so that their expectations are aligned with the teachers' training. That way, the English teaching field in Taiwan would move from a business approach to a pedagogical approach.

4.2.8 Attitudes Toward a University Microcredential

With a few exceptions, the idea of spending extra time to get trained to do a job that they can already do without any training was unappealing to most participating teachers, and that is the system's fault because there are no professional requirements to perform a high skill job, treating teaching with the standards of a low skill job. However, there were a couple of factors that made them change their mind. One of them, which is supported by the literature, was that getting a certificate or a digital badge of completion made interviewees react positively to the idea of investing their time in completing the microcredential because they considered this element a highly prestigious one that can benefit them not only at teaching jobs but also in other industries since they would be perceived as good communicators, good facilitators, and well-rounded professionals with good people skills.

Another factor that changed their opinion, which had an effect given the coincidence that all the teachers who accepted the invitation to participate in the study were former master's students, was earning credits that they could use toward obtaining their degree. Seven out of eight interviewees liked this idea, but their master courses did not have any aims related to the skills developed in this microcredential. The only exception was Estela who has a background

in educational leadership. Despite this gap in the curriculum, Dr. Cee stated that it is extremely important to familiarize students with Taiwanese culture from the first semester and that every international student in Taiwan should have the option of taking an elective course to fulfill the need for cultural knowledge. Therefore, this microcredential could be taken by any international student and be approved toward their degree completion. Additionally, the microcredential should not be exclusively available to foreign English teachers. It should be made available for local students in the fields of education, linguistics, foreign language and literature, and TEFL-related programs. This option would give local students to obtain credits for their degree at the time that they can interact with teachers from around the world. This would allow an incredible opportunity for cultural and language exchange, which would be in line with the first two TESOL standards' domains.

Finally, from all the participants' opinions, it can be observed that the success of a credit-bearing university-level microcredential relies on the universities cooperation with all stakeholders involved. The curriculum design should account for the needs analysis of local and international experts in the field of TESOL, local employers, local teachers, local language learners, parents, and obviously the potential microcredential candidates, including both international students and teachers who never studied in Taiwan. Regarding the implementation, universities should collaborate with experienced teacher trainers to ensure the real-life application of the course.

4.2.9 Universities' Role in Certifying Skills and Building Employability

As mentioned in previous sections, the Taiwanese government and society have a discriminatory approach to the selection and employment of foreign language teachers, which drives both employees and employers to find alternatives to be able to utilize the valuable human resources that the MOE legislation discriminates against. All stakeholders interviewed agreed that the nationality requirements lacked any foundation, and that language teaching work permits should be granted based on a mix of language and teaching skills. This idea is shared by all the teachers interviewed who answered that they would take the course if it qualified them to apply for an English teaching work permit. Even though that is impossible at the moment, with the pressures driven by the Bilingual 2030 Policy to increase EMI education at higher education institutions, local universities could become actors of change by certifying candidates' language and teaching skills through one of the first microcredentials designed specifically for the Taiwanese context.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This research was aimed at understanding the training needs of teachers without formal credentials and the role of the Taiwanese higher education system in filling this gap in training. To achieve this endeavor, data was collected from current and former foreign English teachers through semi-structured online interviews. The interviews were instrumental not only in answering the research questions but also in providing a background on the issue that is not found in the literature. The populations affected by this matter are teachers working in the informal sector and sometimes on the border of what is legal; therefore, they tend to be ignored by research.

In this section, the reader can find the conclusions (aspects of the problem that have not been addressed by previous research and the answer to the research questions), the recommendations, limitations, and considerations for future research.

5.2 Reasons for the Proliferation of Teachers without Formal Credentials in Taiwan

1. There is a market demand for foreign English teachers. Education in Taiwan, as in many other East Asian countries, is not like in other parts of the world, as from an early age, students attend supplementary education institutions after their regular school day. This gave rise to a very dynamic informal sector that is better known as cram schools, which must follow parents' demands in order to stay in business. Therefore, cram schools continue to hire candidates that check the *foreigner box*.
2. The professional requirements for cram school teachers to get a work permit, unlike for primary and secondary school teachers, are non-existent. Instead, the only requirement is related to nationality, which creates difficulties in hiring the candidates that employers deem apt for their school. The nationality discrimination also exists for foreign teachers in the formal sector. Therefore, students who have foreign teachers at school get a very narrow perspective of the role of English in the world, and the diversity of professionals from other nationalities is not allowed.
3. There are not enough qualified foreign teachers in Taiwan. The majority of foreign teachers in Taiwan are adventurous travelers and globetrotters who found a good source of income to finance their life and travels abroad. Therefore, employers lower their standards and hire whoever is willing and available to work with them. Given the importance of the informal sector, the MOE cannot keep cram schools outside of their recruitment programs to allow the formal sector to recruit qualified professionals from abroad.

4. Employers do not offer TPD nor meaningful feedback on performance. The teachers in this study told that their employers did not offer TPD opportunities. One of the participants even shared that she expected that training took place because her employer knew that she had no experience and her work was at a kindergarten, which she considered a very delicate age to work with. Feedback is limited to complaints and comments about appearance and attitudes. Marcos's current employer is excluded from this as it is a Montessori school that must provide teachers with continuous development and meaningful feedback.
5. Foreign teachers are some students' only contact with the outside world. Taiwan is not a diverse island and the only foreign people that many students interact with are their teachers. These teachers are the students' only window to another language⁵ and another culture and should be integrated across all levels of education to bring diversity to the Taiwanese education system.

5.3 Reasons for Entering and Staying in the Profession

1. It is considered easy to enter the profession. All the teachers in this study were contacted by friends who were already working as teachers without formal credentials to be recommended for a teaching job regardless of their professional background or experience. At their first job, all teachers attended short interviews in which practical issues about the job were discussed rather than an assessment of the candidates' skills. The most likely result of these interviews is that the candidates who 'look the part' will walk away with a job offer and paperwork information.
2. Foreign teachers are paid, on average, double the wage of a local teacher. This income allows a full-time foreign teacher to live a very comfortable life, and a part-time student to afford things they could not afford with just a scholarship. Most expatriates who work as either full-time or part-time teachers can afford to do things that the average Taiwanese cannot, such as traveling internationally one or two times per year.
3. The market demands that foreign teachers be native English speakers from the 'West.' As stated in previous sections, there are not enough NESTs to supply the market demand. Therefore, employers resort to legal loopholes to employ NNESTs that 'look the part.' In the case of the participants, they took advantage of their 'Westerner' appearance and their accent that sounds 'standard American' to the untrained local ear.
4. Teachers without formal credentials are willing to stay in a job completely outside of their previous field to secure their residence status and continue to enjoy the Taiwanese healthcare system and overall safety that they may not have in their home countries.

⁵ It has already been explained that local English teachers refuse to interact with students in English.

5. Teachers from countries with weaker economies choose to continue working without the appropriate credentials because the salaries in their home countries are unlikely to match the salaries that they earn in Taiwan. For those from stronger economies, their overall income may be below the income in their countries, but their expenses are less due to a lower cost of living.
6. Teachers without formal credentials have a difficult time integrating into their fields of study in Taiwan. In my participants' case, one of them was a professional teacher, so she has always worked in her field. As for the rest of the participants, the ones who integrated most easily into their own field were business administrators. The ones having more challenges and even no chances were the ones in engineering fields.

5.4 Reasons to Provide TPD to Foreign Teachers via a University-level Microcredential

1. Taiwan has become complacent with the status quo regarding foreign English. The Taiwanese society and, more shockingly, the Taiwanese government have fallen victim to native-speakerism and the native speaker fallacy.
2. Employers have become complacent with candidates' lack of pedagogical skills and are willing to hire those who look and sound 'Westerner' enough for the Taiwanese market.
3. Training English teachers without formal credentials will improve the quality of English teaching around the country, therefore, increasing students' language skills. It will also prevent teacher burnout, resulting in less attrition from the profession and the country, allowing students to be taught by competent teachers for a longer period of time. This would support the aims of the Bilingual 2030 policy.
4. Certifying English teachers without formal credentials has the potential of seeing improvement in students' performance. This improved performance, along with experts' opinions and increased research on the matter, could serve as evidence that teachers' nationality is an irrelevant employment requirement, creating a change in the requisites for applying for an English teacher work permit.
5. A certification, which could allow for legislation change, would stop employers from using legal loopholes to hire foreign teachers, especially the costly option of purchasing different language licenses.
6. A great reason to implement this microcredential is that the qualified human resources do not exist. Neither the FETP nor the informal sector can recruit enough qualified staff from abroad or from the foreign resident community on the island. Training the expatriate community of teachers would help solve this shortage.

5.5 Taiwan's Higher Education System Readiness to Offer an English Teaching Microcredential

1. Academics and employers agree that the top and mid-ranking universities are prepared to design and offer the microcredential because they have experience in terms of internationalization, inbound student mobility, and English medium instruction. Another aspect that was highlighted was that these universities are well spread around the island in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Hence, they can reach participants and employers across the country. Lastly, Taiwanese universities have experience certifying locals as teachers across every field under specific MOE guidelines.
2. The MOE accepts TESOL certificates as credentials for the FETP. However, not all TESOL certificates follow the TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs. Introducing a localized English teacher microcredential would guarantee basic quality standards.
3. The Bilingual 2030 policy aims to increase younger generations' opportunities to attend EMI courses across all levels. In the case of higher education, faculties, and colleges across the country have received funds to transform their academic units into EMI units to increase the availability of courses taught in English. This initiative could support the microcredential so that local and international students could earn an English teacher certificate while allowing for a rich culture and language exchange.

5.6 Teachers' Training Needs

5.6.1 Language TESOL Standards (Domain 1)

Candidates must:

1. As a pre-requisite, demonstrate good English proficiency through a four-skill standardized test or by having attended their whole high school/university in a territory and institution where the language of instruction is English.
2. Understand and challenge the native speaker fallacy and native-speakerism.
3. Understand and embrace different varieties of English as legitimate types of World Englishes.
4. Understand and explain the role of English as an international language in the 21st century.
5. Develop basic knowledge of language structure and components, and the ability to analyze the target language to be taught.

6. Demonstrate interest in familiarizing with the structures and components of students' language to be better prepared for challenges related to the L1.
7. Be able to communicate fluently and accurately in English in an international context.

5.6.2 Culture TESOL Standards (Domain 2)

Candidates must:

1. Be able to share aspects of his/her own culture within the classroom setting without neglecting the students' competence development.
2. Promote respectful and appropriate dialogs and conversation about own, local, and foreign cultures within the classroom setting without neglecting the students' competence development.
3. Develop an understanding of everyday culture, e.g., table manners, societal taboos, social interactions, appropriate student-teacher-administration interaction, aspects of collectivist societies, etc.
4. Develop an understanding of school and work culture to avoid unnecessary conflicts and develop empathy toward students and peers.
5. Develop an understanding of other aspects of culture, such as holidays, festivals, and historical events to be able to utilize those topics in class.

5.6.3 Instruction TESOL Standards (Domain 3)

Candidates must:

1. Assess students' needs and select appropriate materials and teaching techniques accordingly.
2. Design interactive activities and lessons that promote communicative competences, student interaction, engagement, and motivation.
3. Apply techniques to reduce teacher talk time.
4. Develop strategies to get students' attention to the topic and to activate students' prior knowledge.
5. Reduce instruction time by applying techniques to make instructions clear and to check for students' understanding of the instructions.

6. Provide students with guided and independent practice.
7. Monitor students during guided and independent practice to provide timely feedback.
8. Use feedback strategies that do not demotivate or shame students.
9. Develop and use lesson learning outcomes to assess whether students achieved them during the timeframe given.
10. Develop action plans to solve performance issues.
11. Use technology as a valuable resource in the classroom.
12. Help students identify study techniques and resources (including human resources) to practice English outside of the classroom.

5.6.4 Assessment TESOL Standards (Domain 4)

Candidates must:

1. Understand the different types of assessment and their purpose.
2. Design formative and summative assessment activities that are in line with learning outcomes and classroom practice.
3. Utilizes a variety of assessment types and methods that are inclusive of all learning preferences.
4. Develop assessment instruments to measure students' performance, such as rubrics and checklists.
5. Use assessment to help set the pace and continuity of the curriculum.
6. Train students in self and peer-assessment techniques.

5.6.5 Professionalism TESOL Standards (Domain 5)

Candidates must:

1. Identify human and material resources in the workplace and the environment that he/she could resort to for help or as support to prepare for or during the teaching practice.
2. Work in teams.

3. Learn from and with other colleagues by practicing mutual observations and peer feedback.
4. Recognize tools, instruments, and sources of TPD to improve their teaching practice.
5. Practice assertive communication techniques.
6. Behave ethically and professionally following the work culture and the traditions of Taiwan.

5.7 Role of Higher Education

5.7.1 Factors that Create Positive Attitudes Toward a University

Microcredential

1. Less academic content and more ‘hands-on’ activities
2. Credits toward completing a degree
3. Receiving a valid certificate
4. Instructed by a reputable university
5. Instructed not too far from home
6. Online modality
7. Multi-department approach
8. Experienced industry-sector instructors

5.7.2 Universities’ Role in Certifying Skills and Building Employability

University certification of teachers’ skills would:

1. Help end Taiwan’s adherence to the native speaker fallacy and native-speakerism.
2. End discriminatory practices like dismissing teachers based on nationality or ethnicity, or asking employed teachers to lie about their nationality.
3. Help teachers create a sense of belonging in the field regardless of their nationality or mother tongue.

4. Increase teachers' confidence and help shape their teacher identity.
5. Integrate international teachers into the Taiwanese education system and society.
6. Guarantee a better experience for former teachers without formal credentials and avoid teachers leaving the profession too soon.
7. Challenge the legitimacy of the Taiwanese law that prevents teachers from accessing the profession based on their nationality.

5.8 Recommendations

5.8.1 Recommendations at the Government Level:

1. Since cram schools are central to the Taiwanese education system, and most parents cannot conceive the idea of not sending their children to these institutions, the MOE should regulate the credentials and/or experience requirements for all teachers, including foreign teachers.
2. Parents and adult students are willing to pay more to receive lessons from a foreign teacher, especially a NES. Therefore, the MOE should mandate that cram schools recruit qualified professionals and ban advertising the teachers' native language exclusively and instead adopt a holistic approach in which teachers' credentials, qualifications, and experience should be accounted for.
3. The MOE should amend the Regulations Governing Educational Institutions at All levels Applying for Work Permits for Foreign Teachers and Their Administration to establish that teachers should comply with language AND professional requirements, such as having a degree or specialization/certificate/diploma in the subject matter. It should also be established that nationality cannot be used as a means of certifying candidates' language proficiency. Instead, candidates should submit proof that they completed their whole high school or university in a territory and institution where the language they will teach is the language of instruction OR a recognized language test that evaluates all four language skills. For the latter, I would not place strict requirements regarding the test expiration date since such tests are costly and valid only for two years in most cases.
4. The MOL should amend the Employment Service Act to make Article 5 inclusive not only to local citizens but also to foreign citizens to guarantee that language teachers will not be discriminated against based on race, language background, place of origin, place of birth, appearance, among other bases (MOL, 2018). This amendment should not conflict with the language proficiency requirements for language teachers.
5. Candidate teachers without formal credentials should be allowed to apply for a work permit upon proof of enrolment in the proposed microcredential. This recommendation does not apply to international students because their work permits are sponsored by their university, or to spouses of Taiwanese citizens because they do not need a work permit. However, proof of enrolment should be presented to the

- employer before signing or renewing contracts.
6. Academic supervisors, even if they are not teachers, should be required to attend the microcredential course to guarantee methodological support for teachers at the workplace and adequate feedback on performance.
 7. Following recommendation 4, no foreign teacher can earn more than other foreign teachers in the same institution based on their nationality or language background. Starting wages should be determined by a combination of credentials and experience, and pay increases by fair performance appraisal.
 8. Given the changes proposed to the MOE and MOL legislations, the FETP should be open to all qualified professionals regardless of their nationality.
 9. Given the need for qualified professionals in the informal education sector, the FETP should recruit teachers not only for primary and secondary schools but also for cram schools. The placement of the teacher should be done based on a combination of the teachers' interests and experience. Having these qualified teachers at cram schools would support the microcredential's efforts outside of the university.

5.8.2 Recommendations at the Higher Education System Level

1. There needs to be a collaboration between different academics in the fields of ELT, second language acquisition, and education across the country to draft a project for developing the curriculum of the microcredential.
2. The MOE should make alliances with and hire consultants from the most prestigious providers of TESOL certificates to collaborate in the curriculum design and implementation of the microcredential. Examples of such providers are Cambridge English, Trinity College London, SIT Graduate Institute, and Arizona State University.
3. The MOE should promote alliances and cooperations to support the curriculum design and implementation of the microcredential with universities in the top TESOL professional producer like the US, UK, Australia, Canada, or New Zealand, and in the regions with the highest non-native English proficiency like the Netherlands, Singapore, Austria, Portugal, or the Nordic Countries.
4. In the initial stages of implementation, the microcredential should be delivered by experienced TESOL trainers who collaborated in the curriculum design while conducting a train-the-trainer program. Local trainers should start their formation process from the beginning by taking ownership of modules related to the local language and culture.
5. Employers should work closely with universities to allow their employees' teaching practicums at their workplaces. Employees could record themselves in video format for trainers and peers to observe and provide meaningful feedback. Academic supervisors attending the microcredential could fulfill this requirement by conducting teacher observations and being evaluated on their abilities to fill out observation reports and provide feedback to teachers.

6. At the initial stage of the program, the microcredential should be taught only at the universities that have undergraduate or master's programs in ELT, TESOL, TEFL, or TESL. These programs should be led by these academic units in collaboration with other departments, such as linguistics and education. At later stages, universities without programs in ELT, TESOL, TEFL, or TESL could establish academic units to open the microcredential in their institutions.
7. Students of both undergraduate and master programs in ELT, TESOL, TEFL, TESL, or allied professions should be encouraged to take the microcredential along with foreign teachers not only to improve their teaching skills but also to enrich the program with their knowledge and expertise. The credits obtained in the microcredential, and teaching practicums would count for their degree.
8. International students should be allowed to earn credits through the microcredential and teaching practicums, and have those credits applied to their degree when possible. If it is not possible, the student should be dismissed from extracurricular mandatory duties.
9. Local and international students enrolled as full-time degree students should be able to participate in the microcredential at no extra cost. All other attendees should pay the corresponding fees.
10. Local professors who are interested in improving their EMI teaching skills can attend selected modules that are relevant to their needs free of charge.
11. To facilitate access to the microcredential and reduce operational costs, parts of the delivery could be done online at later stages of the project.
12. Since its inception, the project should have the goal of being accredited by the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) in order to gain legitimacy and address the issues of quality and credits with an approach similar to the approaches taken in Europe and Oceania.

5.9 Limitations

The main limitation of this study was to access the participants. The initial pool of teachers contacted had diverse backgrounds in terms of nationality, language, education level, previous field, employment, and legal employment status. However, only a specific demographic accepted the invitation to the interviews: Honduran and Nicaraguan teachers who completed a master's degree as international students in Taiwan. The national origin of the participants may have skewed the findings toward an agreement with the researchers' beliefs as they have also been discriminated against in the recruitment and hiring practices.

On the side of the academics, there was a similar situation. I contacted six academics in total and two accepted the invitation. On the side of the employers, only two were contacted because those were the only contacts available.

5.10 Considerations for Future Research

A study of this kind would work better if the data were collected *in situ*. Researchers planning to further explore this topic should try to contact employers directly at cram schools to recruit participants both on the side of teachers and employers. Researchers should also use their contacts at universities to access academics instead of sending direct invitations. This approach could result in higher participation. All interviews with all participants should take place in person when possible since the online modality might have been a deterrent for the participants who declined the invitation.

In a future study, it would also be advisable to interview teachers of nationalities that are benefited from the Taiwanese legislation to find out their opinion about the current practices and the proposal of changing the nationality requirements for professional and language proficiency requirements. It would be worthwhile to find out NESs' opinion about this issue and whether their privilege affects their point of view.

Finally, one last consideration that researchers should make is to include a quantitative component. When approaching the workplaces of stakeholders, the researchers could share an online survey for them to distribute to employees that decline in-person interviews. These surveys could also be distributed in social media groups that are known to be active with foreign teachers and expatriates.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, J. (2015). Initial teacher training courses and non-native speaker teachers. *ELT Journal*, 70(3), 261–274. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccv072>
- Aškerc Veniger, K. (2016). University teachers' opinions about higher education pedagogical training courses in Slovenia. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 6(4), 141–161. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.57>
- Avvisati, F., Echazarra, A., Givord, P., & Schwabe, M. (2019). *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) - Results from PISA 2018 - Country Note - Chinese Taipei*. OECD. Retrieved April 27, 2023, from https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_TAP.pdf
- Ayodele, J. B., & Akindutire, I. O. (2009). The production of quality teachers to boost the efficiency of Nigeria's education system. *Research in Education*, 81(1), 43–52. <https://doi.org/10.7227/rie.81.4>
- Borlan, J., Moyan, A., Dove, A., Dunleavy, M., & Chachra, V. (2022). Impacts of Microcredentials on Teachers' Understanding of Instructional Practices in Elementary Mathematics. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 22(3), 475–510. Retrieved from <https://citejournal.org/volume-22/issue-3-22/mathematics/impacts-of-microcredentials-on-teachers-understanding-of-instructional-practices-in-elementary-mathematics>.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012) Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57-71). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Burrows, A. C., Borowczak, M., & Mugayitoglu, B. (2021). Computer science beyond coding: Partnering to create teacher cybersecurity microcredentials. *Education Sciences*, 12(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12010004>
- CEDEFOP. (2020). *National Qualifications frameworks (NQFs) online tool*. CEDEFOP National Qualifications frameworks (NQFs) online tool. Retrieved February 13, 2023, from <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/nqfs-online-tool/overview>
- Chen, P. (2016). Politics, economics, society, and overseas Chinese teaching: A case study of australia. *Chinese Education & Society*, 49(6), 351–368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10611932.2016.1252215>
- Chien, C.-W. (2012). Integration of school features into Taiwanese elementary school new english curriculum. *Education 3-13*, 42(6), 589–600. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2012.750376>

- Chien, C.-W. (2019). From language learners to language teachers: Construction and implementation of pedagogical competence in pronunciation instruction. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2019.130110>
- Christiansen, T. W. (2022). The native speaker teacher. theoretical considerations and practical implications. *Language Learning in Higher Education*, 12(2), 495–512. <https://doi.org/10.1515/cercles-2022-2055>
- Cook, E. (2021). Practice-based engineering: Mathematical Competencies and Micro-Credentials. *International Journal of Research in Undergraduate Mathematics Education*, 7(2), 284–305. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40753-020-00128-3>
- Cook, V. J. (2004). Portraits of the L2 user. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Dziubinski, J. P. (2015). From medium to pedagogy: ‘fun and colourful’ lessons as a model for trainee teachers in further education colleges – questioning the postmodernist constructivist approach to classroom practice. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 20(3), 315–323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2015.1063276>
- Espejo Villar, L. B., Lázaro Herrero, L., & Álvarez López, G. (2022). UNESCO strategy and digital policies for teacher training: The deconstruction of innovation in Spain. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, 11(1), 15–30. <https://doi.org/10.7821/naer.2022.1.812>
- European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop); European Training Foundation (ETF); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). (2019). Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks 2019: volume I: Thematic Chapters
- European MOOC Consortium. (n.d.). *EMC Common Microcredential Framework - EADTU*. EMC Common Microcredential Framework. Retrieved February 13, 2023, from https://emc.eadtu.eu/images/EMC_Common_Microcredential_Framework_.pdf
- Firman, F., Friscilla, W. T., Cicyn, R., & Fellicia, A. S. (2019). An analysis of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers pedagogical competence and readiness in maintaining the implementation of the 2013 curriculum. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 14(13), 474–483. <https://doi.org/10.5897/err2019.3705>
- Granero-Gallegos, A., Escaravajal, J. C., López-García, G. D., & Baños, R. (2022). Influence of teaching styles on the learning academic confidence of teachers in training. *Journal of Intelligence*, 10(3), 71. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence10030071>

- Hobbs, V. (2013). 'A basic starter pack': The TESOL certificate as a course in Survival. *ELT Journal*, 67(2), 163–174. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccs078>
- Holliday, A. (2015). *The struggle to teach English as an international language*. Oxford University Press.
- Howard, E., & Babb, D. (2022). FLOC, Facilitating Learning Online Certification Workshop Part of the Micro-Credential series for online teaching certification. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 25(3). Retrieved from <https://ojdla.com/articles/floc-facilitating-learning-online-certification-workshop-part-of-the-micro-credential-series-for-online-teaching-certification>.
- Huang, S. (2003, January 7). MOE to snap up foreign teachers. *Taipei Times*. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2003/01/07/190049>
- Kachru, B. B. (Ed.). (1982). *The other tongue*. Chicago: Illinois University Press.
- König, J., Blömeke, S., Jentsch, A., Schlesinger, L., Felske née Nehls, C., Musekamp, F., & Kaiser, G. (2021). The links between Pedagogical Competence, instructional quality, and mathematics achievement in the lower Secondary Classroom. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 107(1), 189–212. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10649-020-10021-0>
- Kurnia Irmawati, D., Mega Asri, T., & Luqman Aziz, A. (2021). How EFL teachers deal with Pedagogical Competence Development for the teaching of writing: A study on higher educational level in Indonesian context. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 8(1), 42–51. <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.509.2021.81.42.51>
- Li, G. (2017). Preparing culturally and linguistically competent teachers for English as an international language education. *TESOL Journal*, 8(2), 250–276. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.322>
- Luke, C., & Young, V. M. (2020). Integrating micro-credentials into professional learning: Lessons from five districts. *Digital Promise*. <https://doi.org/10.51388/20.500.12265/103>
- Mabuan, R. A. (2018). Confessions of a MOOCER: An autoethnographic inquiry on online distance education. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 198–213. <https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.471916>
- Martin, A. J., Slade, D. G., & Hodges, L. D. (2022). Pre pre-service teacher training: Professional preparation and work-integrated learning pedagogy. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 23(3), 347–357.
- McGreal, R., & Olcott, D. (2022). A strategic reset: Micro-credentials for Higher Education Leaders. *Smart Learning Environments*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-022-00190-1>

- McGreal, R., Mackintosh, W., Cox, G., & Olcott, Jr., D. (2022). Bridging the gap: Micro-credentials for development. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 23(3), 288–302.
<https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v23i3.6696>
- Mejía Cárcamo, A. H. (2019). *Non-native English-speaking teachers in Taiwan: A SWOT Analysis on Honduran English Teachers* (Unpublished master's thesis). National Chung Cheng University, Minxiong, Taiwan.
- Microcredentials.eu. (2022, October 28). *Home*. MicroHE. Retrieved February 13, 2023, from <https://microcredentials.eu/>
- Ministry of Education. (2018, December 17). *Implement in Full Scale Bilingualization of Taiwan's Educational System; Cultivate Bilingual Talents to Bring Taiwan to the World*. Retrieved May 1, 2023, from <https://english.moe.gov.tw/cp-13-17790-80201-1.html>
- Ministry of Education. (2022). Regulations governing educational institutions at all levels applying for work permits for foreign teachers and their administration. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=H0030058>
- Ministry of Labor. (2018). *Employment Service Act*. Employment Service Act. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=N0090001>
- Mukeredzi, T. G. (2016). The nature of professional learning needs of Rural Secondary School Teachers. *SAGE Open*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016643142>
- Mukeredzi, T. G., Mthiyane, N., & Bertram, C. (2015). Becoming professionally qualified: The school-based mentoring experiences of part-time PGCE students. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(2), 1–9.
<https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v35n2a1057>
- National Development Council (2021). *Bilingual 2030*. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from https://www.ndc.gov.tw/en/Content_List.aspx?n=BF21AB4041BB5255.
- Novianti, N., & Nurlaelawati, I. (2019). Pedagogical Competence Development of University Teachers with non-education background: The case of a large University of education in Indonesia. *International Journal of Education*, 11(2), 172. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ije.v11i2.15711>
- Olcott, D. (2021). Micro-credentials: A catalyst for strategic reset and change in U.S. higher education. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 36(1), 19–35.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08923647.2021.1997537>
- Pae, T.-I. (2016). Effects of the differences between native and non-native English-speaking teachers on students' attitudes and motivation toward learning English. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 37(2), 163–178.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2016.1235012>

- Palacios, R., Larrazabal, S., & Monzalve, M. (2022). Evident demands and absent changes: Special education teachers' initial training in Chile. *British Journal of Special Education*, 49(4), 628–647. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12423>
- Pavlenko, A. (2007). *Bilingual Minds: Emotional Experience, Expression and Representation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Phairee, C., Sanitchon, N., Suphanagthong, I., Graham, S., Prompruang, J., de Groot, F. O., & Hopkins, D. (2008). The teaching practicum in Thailand: Three Perspectives. *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(4), 655–659. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2008.tb00154.x>
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Raud, N., & Orekhova, O. (2020). Training teachers for multilingual primary schools in Europe: Key components of teacher education curricula. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 19(1), 50–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2020.1718678>
- Schiering, D., Sorge, S., & Neumann, K. (2021). Promoting progression in higher education teacher training: How does cognitive support enhance student physics teachers' content knowledge development? *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(10), 2022–2034. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2021.1953337>
- Schina, D., Esteve-González, V., & Usart, M. (2020). An overview of teacher training programs in educational robotics: Characteristics, best practices and recommendations. *Education and Information Technologies*, 26(3), 2831–2852. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10377-z>
- SIT Graduate Institute. (n.d.). *Certificate in Tesol*. SIT Graduate Institute site. Retrieved February 12, 2023, from <https://graduate.sit.edu/programs-of-study/certificate-in-tesol/>
- Smith, S. J. (2016). Cuban Voices: A Case Study of English Language Teacher Education. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 15(4), 100-111.
- Staker, H., Arnett, T., & Powell, A. (2020). Developing a Student-Centered Workforce through Micro-Credentials. *Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation*.
- Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program. (n.d.). Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://tfetp.epa.ntnu.edu.tw/en/tfetp/web/home>
- Tarwiyah, S., Warsono, W., Linggar Bharati, D. A., & Sutopo, D. (2018). Professional learning through coaching: Toward the enhancement of the teachers' pedagogical competence. *Arab World English Journal*, 9(4), 407–419. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no4.30>

- TESOL International Association (2015, November 10). *TESOL standards for short-term TEFL/TESL certificate programs* [Presentation]. Virtual Seminar.
- TESOL International Association. (2006). Position statement against discrimination of nonnative speakers of English in the field of TESOL. *Alexandria, VA: TESOL*.
- Tran-Than, V. (2021). “Why I don’t teach as I was trained”: Vietnamese early career esol teachers’ experience of reality shock. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *46*(12), 35–51. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2021v46n12.3>
- Tuna, M. H. (2021). The professionalisation of Islamic Religious Education Teachers. *British Journal of Religious Education*, *44*(2), 188–199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2021.1999905>
- Úbeda Montenegro, I. J. (2020). *Thirdness: Advantages and Disadvantages of Foreign Non-native English Speaking Teachers in Taiwan* (thesis). National Chung Cheng University, Chiayi County. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/11296/64qz33>
- Van Zyl, J. M., Els, C. J., & Blignaut, A. S. (2013). Development of ODL in a newly industrialised country according to face-to-face contact, ICT, and e-readiness. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, *14*(1), 84–105. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v14i1.1342>
- Vilppola, J., Lämsä, J., Vähäsantanen, K., & Hämäläinen, R. (2022). Teacher trainees' experiences of the components of ICT competencies and key factors in ICT competence development in work-based vocational teacher training in Finland. *International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training*, *9*(2), 146–166. <https://doi.org/10.13152/ijrvet.9.2.1>
- Wald, H. S., & Reis, S. P. (2010). Beyond the margins: Reflective writing and development of reflective capacity in medical education. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, *25*(7), 746–749. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-010-1347-4>
- Wang, L. Y., & Lin, T. B. (2013). The representation of professionalism in native English-speaking teachers recruitment policies: A comparative study of Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *12*(3), 5–22.
- White, S. (2021). Developing credit based micro-credentials for the teaching profession: An Australian descriptive case study. *Teachers and Teaching*, *27*(7), 696–711. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2021.2003324>
- Xu, S., & Ogunleye, J. (2022). Part 4: Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training | Beginning Teachers Training System in Shanghai: How to Guarantee the Teaching Profession from the Start? In N. Popov (Ed.), *Towards the Next Epoch of Education* (Vol. 20, pp. 166–173). essay, Bulgarian Comparative Education Society.

Yeh, A. (2002). Teaching English in Taiwan: issues of inequality and low motivation. *English Today*, 18(4), 50–52. doi: 10.1017/s026607840200408x

Zhang, J., & Zhang, L. J. (2020). Learners' satisfaction with native and non-native English-speaking teachers' teaching competence and their learning motivation: A path-analytic approach. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 41(3), 558–573. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2020.1833834>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample of Semi-structured Interview for Teachers

Dear _____, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am writing a master's thesis on the teacher professional development needs of foreign English teachers in Taiwan and this work would not be possible without your support. First of all, would you agree for me to record this call? The recording will not be shared with anyone, and it will just be heard by me when I transcribe the interview. The audio file and transcripts will be stored on my PC and eventually destroyed. You have the right not to answer or to stop the interview at any point as well as to withdraw your participation before my thesis submission. If you wish to do so, please contact me, providing me with the following participant number and I will grant your request. No. ____

I will start by asking you for some demographic information:

1. What gender do you identify with?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your nationality?
4. Please state which languages you speak in the order that you learned them.
5. Would you consider yourself a native speaker of English? If not, would you consider yourself to have an intermediate, high-intermediate, or advanced level of English?
6. What is your level of education and in which field?
7. Why did you move to Taiwan?
8. How long have you taught/did you teach English in Taiwan?
9. Could you list all the teaching jobs you've had in Taiwan, the type of institution, and the time you spent at each workplace? No need to mention employers' names.

Thank you! Now I will ask you some questions about your experience working as an English teacher in Taiwan. Please feel free to answer with honesty. You will not be judged for your answers, please remember that I am a teacher too and I may have struggled with the same issues. If you wish me to clarify or rephrase a question, please feel free to let me know.

10. How did you get your first teaching job in Taiwan?
11. Had you taught English before this job?
12. What motivated you to work as an English teacher?
13. Did you enter the teaching profession with the aim of staying in it permanently?

14. If you had the chance, would you move to another field?
15. Would you consider teaching English indefinitely in Taiwan if you couldn't get a job in your field?
16. How has your job as a teacher contributed to your livelihood?
17. Has your job as a teacher contributed to your knowledge of Taiwanese society and culture?
18. Have your employers offered you teacher training opportunities? Please tell me your opinion about such experiences.
19. Have you had teacher training opportunities outside your workplace? Please tell me your opinion about such experiences.
20. Have you applied what you learned in those training sessions to your teaching practice?
21. Are there friends or colleagues that you can ask for advice when you don't know how to solve an issue at work?
22. Do you feel that your colleagues at work are team players or complainers?
23. Do you feel valued at work beyond the fact that you are a foreigner or because you are, or others think you are a native English speaker?
24. Do you have the freedom to choose what to teach and how to assess your students? If not, would you like to?
25. Do you consider your job challenging, time-consuming, or stressful?
26. The Taiwan government exclusively allows the following countries' citizens to apply for an English teacher's work permit:
<https://tfetp.epa.ntnu.edu.tw/packages/tfetp/web/files/The%20List%20of%20Nation%20with%20English%20as%20the%20Official%20or%20Common%20Language.pdf>.
What is your opinion about this approach?
27. This is the remuneration and benefits that the Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program offers teachers and teaching assistants
<https://tfetp.epa.ntnu.edu.tw/en/tfetp/web/remuneration>, which include reimbursement for TESOL certificate training costs for teaching assistants. If you had the chance to speak to the Minister of Education, would you advise him to invest in opportunities for teachers who are already in the country? How and which groups of teachers could such projects benefit?

Now I will ask you questions related to your students. Please think about students throughout your teaching career in Taiwan, not only your current or most recent class.

28. How do your students learn English outside the classroom?

29. Do you feel frustrated because students:

1. don't focus on the task you assigned?
2. forget what you already taught them?
3. don't pay attention to your instruction?
4. are too noisy or distracted when you want to begin the lesson or an activity?
5. remain quiet when asked to participate?

30. I will mention some issues in teaching, and I would like you to tell me if you would like to receive training on such issues. You could reply "yes", "I'm not interested", "doesn't apply to me", or ask for clarification. Feel free to elaborate after your answer if you wish.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| A. Avoiding teacher burnout | G. Teaching pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary |
| B. Motivating students | H. Integrating technology in the classroom |
| C. Techniques to make your instructions easier to understand | I. Making lesson plans |
| D. Classroom management/discipline | J. Writing learning objectives |
| E. Keeping students busy without keeping yourself busy | K. Intercultural awareness |
| F. Teaching a lesson without a book | |

Now I will ask you some questions about your attitudes toward a hypothetical teaching training program.

31. Do you think that there is a general need for English teacher training among foreign teachers in Taiwan?
32. Would you be willing to participate in a one-semester university course to prepare you to teach English in Taiwan? Why or why not?

I will ask you now if you would take the course under certain conditions.

33. Would you take the course if you received a certificate of achievement known as a microcredential?
34. Would you take the course if it gave you credits toward a current or future degree?
35. If this course were offered, would you take it/have taken it at your Taiwanese university? Please mention the university name.
36. Think about the locations where you have lived in Taiwan, which universities would you be willing to attend for this course?
37. Would you be willing to take this course if it were offered online by a Taiwanese university?
38. Would you take this course if it gave you a work permit for teaching English?
39. Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix B: Sample of Semi-structured Interview for Academics

Dear _____, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am writing a master's thesis on the teacher professional development needs of foreign English teachers in Taiwan and this work would not be possible without your support. First of all, would you agree for me to record this call? The recording will not be shared with anyone, and it will just be heard by me when I transcribe the interview. The audio file and transcripts will be stored on my PC and eventually destroyed. You have the right not to answer or to stop the interview at any point as well as to withdraw your participation before my thesis submission. If you wish to do so, please contact me, providing me with the following participant number and I will grant your request. No.

1. Is there a need for international English teachers in Taiwan?
2. What unique features do international English teachers bring to the English language learning field in Taiwan?
3. Are there any cultural/language-specific competences that international English teachers should possess to teach in Taiwan?
4. Why is there a preference for English native speakers when recruiting and hiring teachers in Taiwan?
5. The MOE's Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program recruits teachers and teaching assistants from the following countries:
<https://tfetp.epa.ntnu.edu.tw/packages/tfetp/web/files/The%20List%20of%20Nations%20with%20English%20as%20the%20Official%20or%20Common%20Language.pdf>. What is your opinion about this approach?
6. The remuneration and benefits that the Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program offers teachers and teaching assistants
<https://tfetp.epa.ntnu.edu.tw/en/tfetp/web/remuneration> include reimbursement for TESOL certificate training costs for TAs. If you had the chance to speak to the minister of education, would you advise him to invest in opportunities for teachers who are already in the country? How and which groups of teachers could such projects benefit?
7. Do you think that the Taiwanese higher education system could take ownership of a credit-bearing, competency-based microcredential to offer English teacher training similar to a TESOL certificate aimed at teaching English in Taiwan? Examples below:

<https://www.tesol.org/professional-development/education-and-events/on-demand-facilitated/tesol-core-certificate-program/>

<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/teaching-qualifications/celta/about-the-celta-course/>

<https://graduate.sit.edu/programs-of-study/certificate-in-tesol/>

<https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/teaching-english/CertTESOL>

8. Besides counting for credits in education, English, or linguistics, could the credits earned through this microcredential count as credits for general education or Taiwanese culture/society courses?
9. Do you think your university could teach this microcredential?
10. Besides your university, which other universities across the country do you think could offer this program?
11. Are Taiwanese universities prepared to teach such a course?
12. Would it be beneficial for the English teaching field in Taiwan that programs like this help international English teachers obtain legal employment and residence/work permits regardless of their nationality?
13. Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix C: Sample of Semi-structured Interview for Employers

Dear _____, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am writing a master's thesis on the teacher professional development needs of foreign English teachers in Taiwan and this work would not be possible without your support. First of all, would you agree for me to record this call? The recording will not be shared with anyone, and it will just be heard by me when I transcribe the interview. The audio file and transcripts will be stored on my PC and eventually destroyed. You have the right not to answer or to stop the interview at any point as well as to withdraw your participation before my thesis submission. If you wish to do so, please contact me, providing me with the following participant number and I will grant your request. No.

1. Is there a need for international English teachers in Taiwan?
2. What unique features do international English teachers bring to the English language learning field in Taiwan?
3. Why is there a preference for English native speakers when recruiting and hiring teachers in Taiwan?
4. Are most international English teachers prepared to teach in Taiwan?
5. Are there any cultural/language-specific skills that international English teachers should possess to teach in Taiwan?
6. The MOE's Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program recruits teachers and teaching assistants from the following countries:
<https://tfetp.epa.ntnu.edu.tw/packages/tfetp/web/files/The%20List%20of%20Nations%20with%20English%20as%20the%20Official%20or%20Common%20Language.pdf>. What is your opinion about this approach?
7. This is the remuneration and benefits that the Taiwan Foreign English Teacher Program offers teachers and teaching assistants
<https://tfetp.epa.ntnu.edu.tw/en/tfetp/web/remuneration>, which include reimbursement for TESOL certificate training costs for TAs. If you had the chance to speak to the minister of education, would you advise him to invest in opportunities for teachers who are already in the country? How and which groups of teachers could such projects benefit?
8. Do you think that Taiwanese universities could take ownership of a competency-based microcredential to offer English teacher training similar to a TESOL certificate aimed at teaching English in Taiwan? Examples below:
<https://www.tesol.org/professional-development/education-and-events/on-demand-facilitated/tesol-core-certificate-program/>
<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/teaching-qualifications/celta/about-the-celta-course/>
<https://graduate.sit.edu/programs-of-study/certificate-in-tesol/>

<https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/teaching-english/CertTESOL>

9. Which universities across the country do you think could offer this program?
10. Would it be beneficial for the English teaching field in Taiwan that programs like this help international English teachers obtain legal employment and residence/work permits regardless of their nationality?
11. Would you like to add anything else?