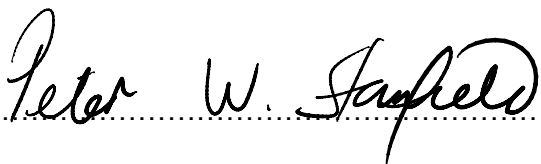


An Exploration of Place-Based TESOL

Submitted by Peter William Stanfield to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education in TESOL, October 2012

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to explore the assumption that classrooms are the most appropriate places for the Teaching of English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) to adult learners in contemporary global society. It considers the success of postmodern general education curricula that systematically dissolve the boundaries between the classroom and the community and seeks to show why such a place-based approach might be particularly useful in transforming TESOL curricula which for the most part overlook informal learning. This study offers 15 successful non-mother tongue English users the opportunity to reflect on their language learning in two separate open-ended interviews. Subsequently, it analyses the range and properties of the places of their acquisition as they emerge from the interview data. The study finds that the classroom is an insufficient place because its social relations necessarily limit learner agency and generally render it ineffective for ESOL acquisition. This suggests the need to transform TESOL into a practice from within which quite new places of learning with more equal social relations emerge where English language can be effectively acquired. This study recommends that English language learners and teachers collaboratively negotiate opportunities for participation in real-world English speaking communities of practice in order to acquire language rapidly and thoroughly. It suggests that this might be achieved by transforming tertiary level English classrooms into laboratories for critical reflection where students are encouraged to discuss problems of significance to them and subsequently deliver real world solutions to the local community. This exploration of place-based TESOL employs Critical Discourse Analysis as its methodology and is situated within the critical paradigm of language education research.

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