TESOL RPC Research Priorities Survey 2022: Report on Findings
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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from the August 2022 TESOL Research Professional Council (RPC) Research Priorities Survey. With an initial 639 respondents, the survey gathered demographic data as well as asked survey takers to share topics and contexts they felt should be prioritized in the field of TESOL. They were also asked to share what they felt were the major challenges to carrying out research along with an opportunity to share anything else they might like to add. The survey data were analysed both graphically and thematically.

- Demographic data point to respondents coming from a wide range of backgrounds.
- Key research priorities underscore the importance of teaching methods, teacher development, and educational technology as broad topic areas warranting future research.
- Contexts to prioritize include particular educational contexts, geographic locations, and learner groups.
- The top challenges to carrying out research include putting together an effective research design, finding funding, and balancing a busy workload.
- Finally, when asked what else respondents wanted to add, key themes were related to recommendations, dissemination, and contexts.

The top themes for the topics, contexts, and challenges are represented graphically in Figure 1 to illustrate the number of responses associated with each theme relative to the others. These findings present an interesting picture of topics and contexts to prioritize along with challenges to address. As these findings are interpreted and the implications are considered, they provide a basis for moving forward with putting together a set of research priorities in the field of TESOL for the next five years.

Figure 1

Key Themes from Across the Data
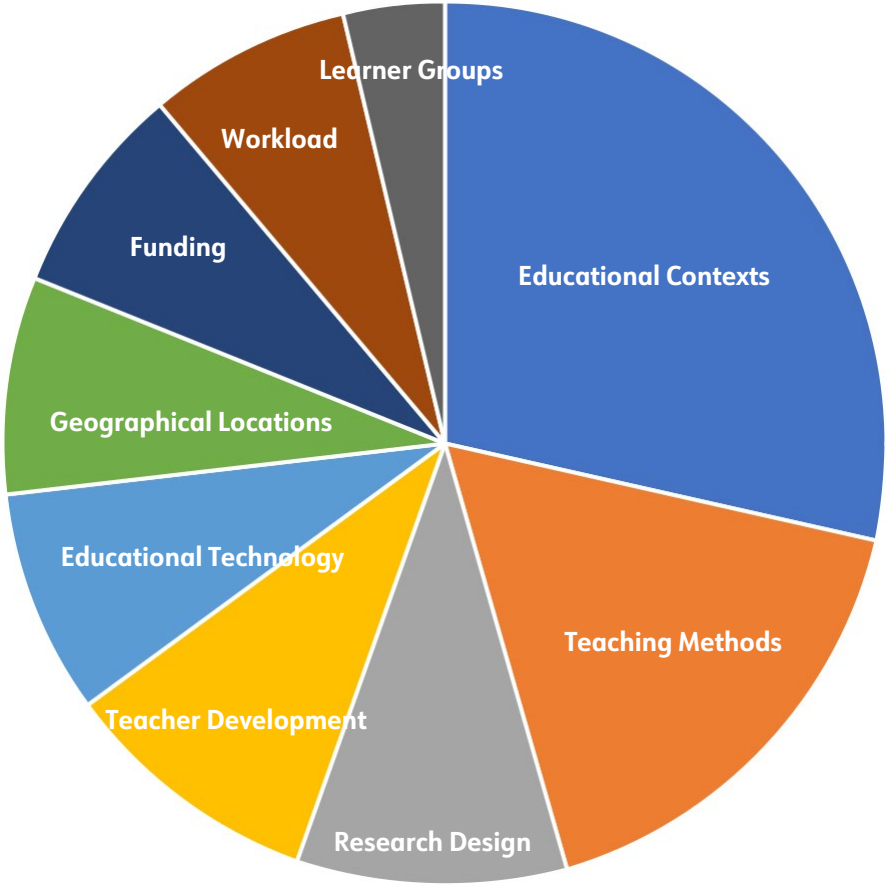
Introduction

In August 2022, a survey developed by a sub-committee of the TESOL International Association's Research Professional Council (RPC) was launched to query people working in English language education on what they thought the research priorities should be for the field over the next five years.

The survey elicited demographic information from respondents, such as years of work, educational background, geographic region, and work setting. The survey then provided an opportunity for respondents to indicate what they thought the top three research topics, contexts, and challenges were that should be prioritized in the field of TESOL. There was also an opportunity for respondents to add anything else they would like to share on the survey. The survey was disseminated through the TESOL International Association's social media channels and emails to the membership. The survey was further advertised on interest section discussion boards on my.tesol.org.

Graphic representation generated by the online survey tool is presented to represent the demographic data from the survey. For the qualitative responses, the data were coded and the codes gathered together into major themes related to each of the main questions on the survey. The codes were not predetermined. Rather, each response was considered on its own, and assigned a code that best captured the main point in the response. The primary code represented the overarching theme related to the question at hand. Additional codes were sometimes added to the responses to capture a more refined description of what the respondent wrote in their survey answer. The process was iterative and recursive, with codes being revisited and refined a number of times in order to identify the major themes related to the key survey questions. In addition, approximately 30% of the responses were independently coded by a second researcher. The 30% subset of independently coded data were compared with the full set of initially coded data to contribute to the validity of the identified codes and to reach a consensus on the final themes related to key research priorities, contexts, and challenges. The survey started with a total of 639 respondents. However, fewer respondents answered each of the following questions. The numbers of responses for each question are reported in the findings.

Findings

Demographic Information

Looking at the demographic data as a whole, the largest single group of similar respondents are people who might have over 20 years of experience in English language education, hold a master's degree, live in North America, and teach in a post-secondary setting. However, large numbers of the respondents do not necessarily fit that description, and they come from a wide variety of experience levels, educational backgrounds, geographical locations, and teaching contexts. The wide range of respondents contributes to a fuller picture of the opinions of people working in the field of TESOL and what research priorities are important to the particular people taking the survey. Figures 2 through 7 present a graphical representation of the demographic data collected on the survey.
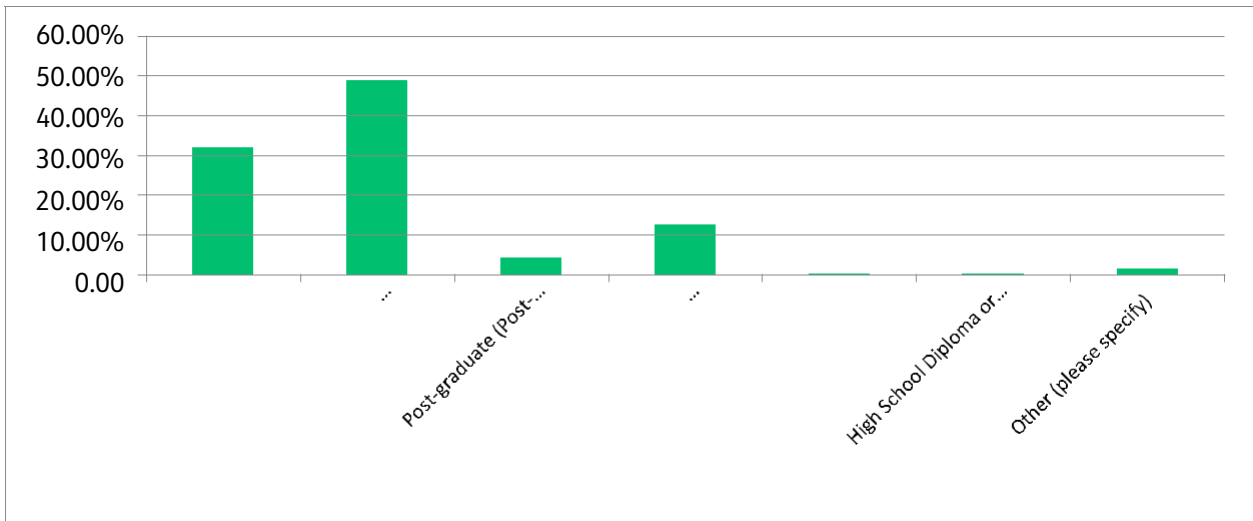
Figure 2

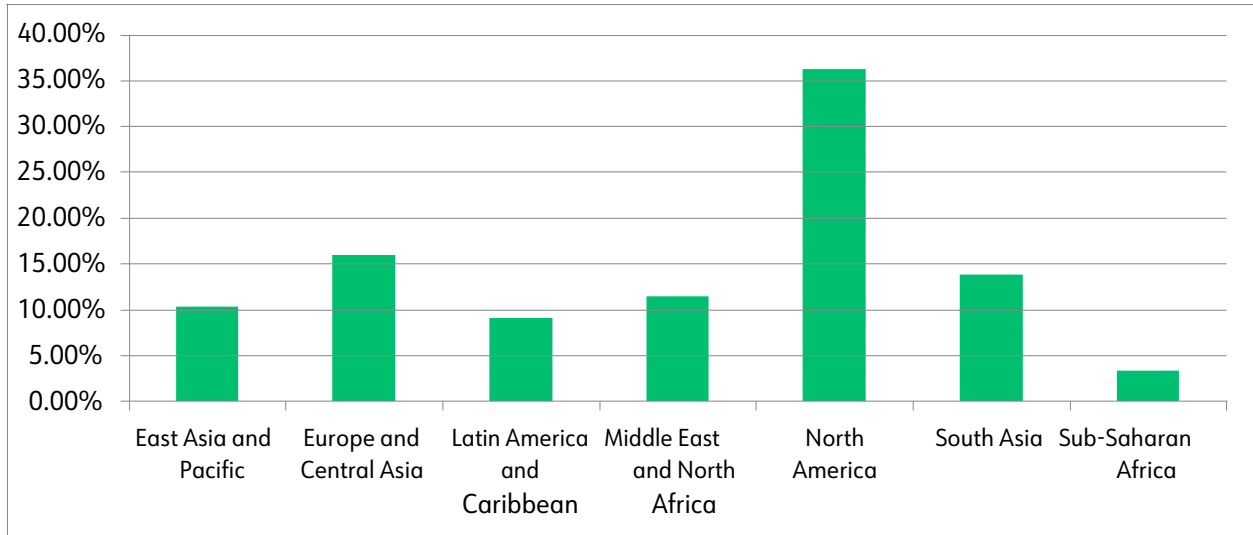*Years Worked in English Language Education*
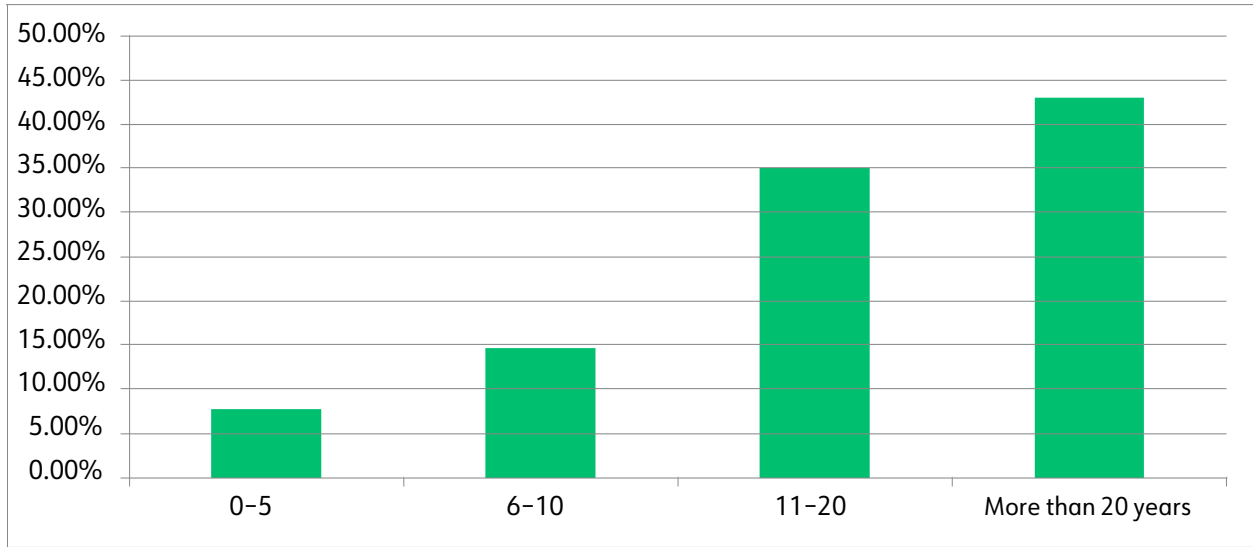
Figure 3

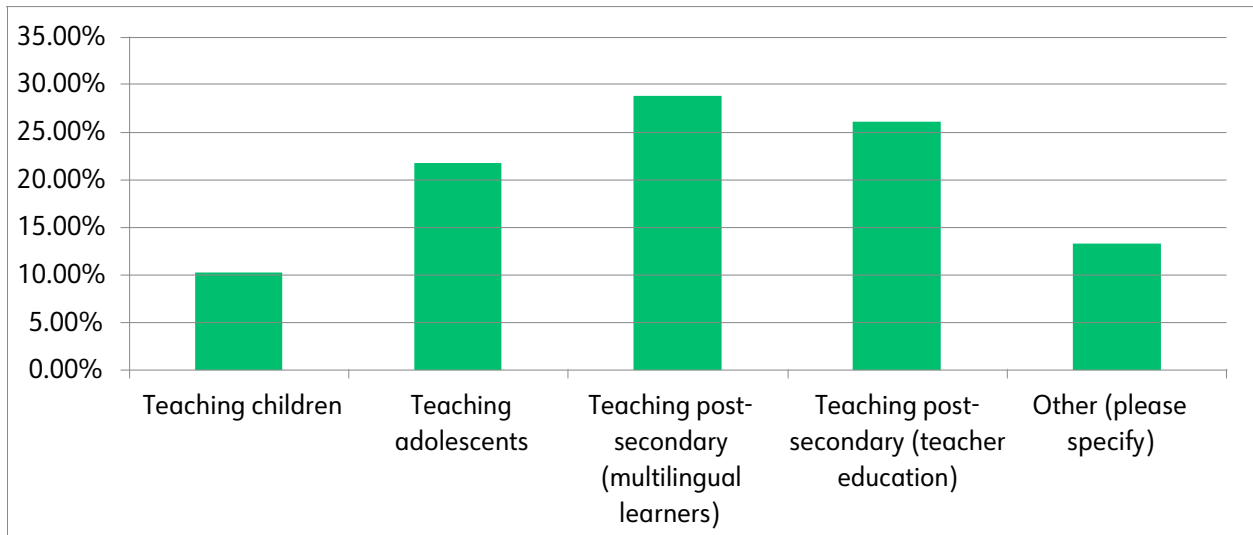*Highest Educational Qualification*

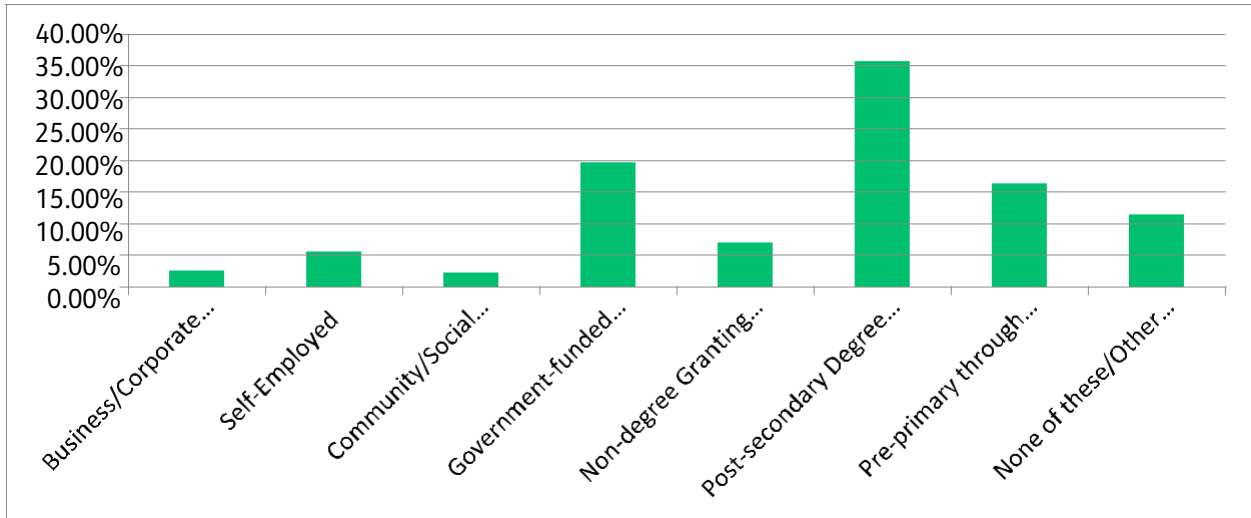**Figure 4**

Geographic Region

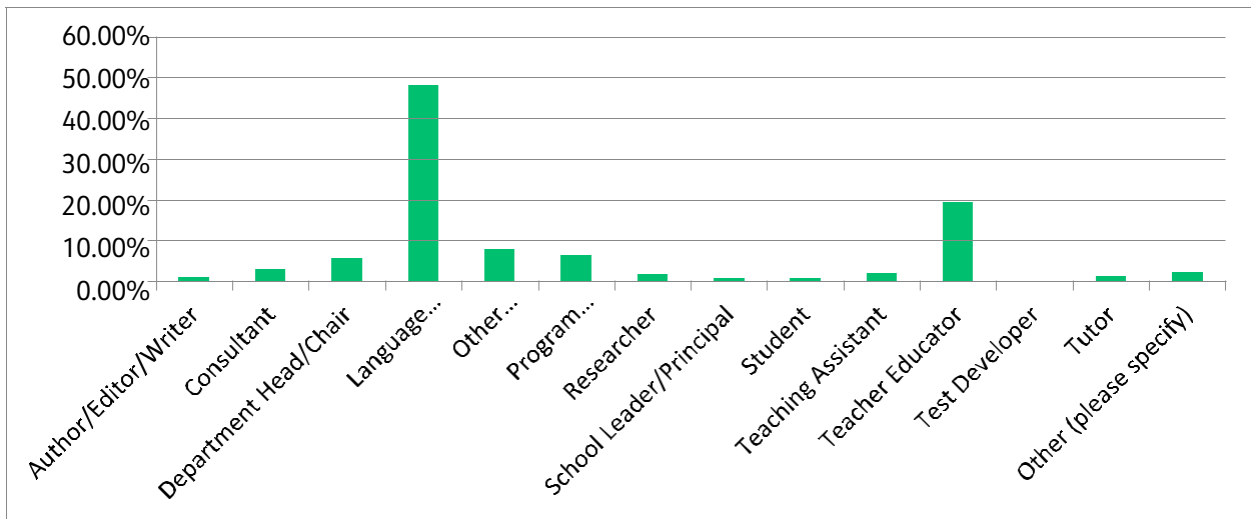

Figure 5

Main Teaching Level

Figure 6

Main Work Setting

Figure 7

Main Role

Priority Research Topics

Respondents were asked for the top three research topics that should be prioritized in the field of TESOL. For first, second, and third top three research topics, there were 363, 349, and 311 responses respectively. These responses were combined (n=1043) for the thematic analysis. Teaching methods, teacher development, and educational technology were identified as the top three research topics that should be prioritized in the field of TESOL. Some examples of specific teaching methods that respondents felt merited research priorities included methods for teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms, translanguaging, and culturally responsive teaching. For teacher development, the suggestions included reference to both pre-

service teacher education and in-service professional development. Topics related to educational technology that were important included both online teaching and learning as well as blended approaches to teaching and learning. Table 1 presents the major themes related to this question.

Table 1

Research Topics to Prioritize (n = 1043)

Rank	Theme	Incidences
1	Teaching Methods	252
2	Teacher Development	141
3	Educational Technology	122
4	Skills Development	119
5	Learner Characteristics	58
6	Curriculum and Materials	52
7	Equity Diversity Inclusion Decolonization	52
8	Other	45
9	Assessment	42
10	Additional Language Acquisition	34
11	Contexts	33
12	Global Englishes	32
13	Motivation	24
14	Sociocultural Factors	21
15	Research Methods	16

Priority Research Contexts

Next, respondents were asked for the top three research contexts that should be prioritized in the field of TESOL. For the first, second, and third top three research contexts, there were 363, 330, and 295 responses respectively. These responses were combined (n=988) for the thematic analysis. In the data for this question, educational contexts, research topics, and geographical contexts were identified as the three largest themes, with learner contexts following as the fourth. As research topics were covered by the previous question, educational contexts, geographical contexts, and learner contexts (n=596) are the themes most salient to this question. In educational contexts, post-secondary, primary school / young learner, and online learning were identified as the top three places that should be prioritized in TESOL research. In geographical contexts, English as a foreign language (EFL), the global south / majority world, and international contexts were identified as the geographical locations that warrant prioritization. Finally, in terms of the learners, multilingual learners, learners with exceptionalities, and learners with refugee experiences were the top three most mentioned codes in the data. Table 2 presents the three most relevant major themes related to contexts, along with their sub-themes.

Table 2

Research Contexts to Prioritize (n=596)

Educational Contexts (n=423)		Geographical Contexts (n=118)		Learner Contexts (n=55)	
Post-Secondary	65	EFL Contexts	38	Bilingual / Multilingual Learners	25
Primary / Young Learners	55	Global South / Majority World	30	Learners with Exceptionalities	8
Online Learning	54	International Contexts	18	Refugee Experiences / Conflict	8
PK-12	46	Anglosphere	13	Family	5
Adult Education	36	Rural Contexts	7	Gender / Sexual Orientation	4
Teacher Education	33	Asia Pacific	5	Interrupted Education	2
Adolescent Learners / Secondary	30	Urban Contexts	4	Literacy	2
Professional Development	24				
Classroom Based Research	21				
Under Resourced Contexts	15				
Extracurricular Settings	14				
Workplace	13				
General	5				
PK-16	4				
Community Based	3				
Study Abroad	3				
Home School	1				
Learning Centres	1				

Research Challenges

Next, survey takers were asked to list the top three challenges to carrying out research in the field of TESOL. For the first, second, and third top three challenges listed, there were 361, 328, and 290 responses respectively. These responses were combined (n=979) for the thematic analysis. Discounting the largest theme labelled "miscellaneous" to account for a wide range of comments that didn't always connect to the topic at hand, the top three challenges identified in the data were related to research design, funding, and workload. Key sub-themes related to research design included challenges related to data collection and analysis as well as participant recruitment. The theme of funding pointed to inadequate or unavailable financial support for research in the field of TESOL. Finally, the respondents' workloads were also identified as a barrier to research, with a lack of time to engage in

research and competing priorities with teaching assignments preventing more research from taking place. Table 3 presents the major themes related to this question.

Table 3

Challenges to Carrying Out Research (n=979)

Rank	Theme	Incidences
1	Miscellaneous*	211
2	Research Design	147
3	Funding	115
4	Workload	110
5	Access	87
6	Institutional Support	60
7	Knowledge Base	58
8	Collaboration	56
9	Research Culture	47
10	Applicability	29
11	Dissemination	25
12	Ethics	21
13	Equity Diversity Inclusion Decolonization	13

*Miscellaneous comprises research topics and other non-related issues

Anything Else

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to add anything else they would like to share regarding research priorities in the field of TESOL. This question elicited 178 responses, which were analysed thematically. The largest theme in this set of data indicated that respondents did not have anything else to add. However, key themes related to recommendations, dissemination, and contexts were identified to contribute to a fuller picture of the respondents' opinions related to setting research priorities for the field. Some recommendations that repeated in the data included building the knowledge base related to TESOL research and providing funding opportunities. Responses related to the theme of dissemination highlighted the need to make connections between teachers and researchers and creating platforms for practitioner-friendly knowledge translation. Finally, the theme of contexts captured respondents concerns for more research in adult educational contexts and locations outside of North America. Table 4 presents the major themes related to the open question asking if respondents had anything else to share.

Table 4

Anything Else to Share (n=178)

Rank	Theme	Incidences
1	Nothing Further	41
2	Recommendations	24

3	Dissemination	22
4	Contexts	19
5	Support and Collaboration	15
6	Gratitude	11
7	Miscellaneous	8
8	Research Topic	6
9	Educational Technology	5
10	Teacher Development	5
11	Concerns	4
12	EDID	4
13	Teaching Methods	4
14	Collaboration	3
15	Research Design	3
16	Funding	2
17	Institutional Support	2

Conclusion

This report provides an overview of the data collected by the TESOL RPC Research Priorities Survey that was disseminated in the summer of 2022. While the largest group of respondents had over 20 years of experience, completed graduate school, worked in North America, and taught in a post-secondary setting, most of the respondents represented a wider range of backgrounds and locations. Key research topics identified included teaching methods, teacher development, and educational technology. Key contexts pointed to the educational contexts, geographic contexts, and the learner contexts that were important to the respondents. Challenges to carrying out this research included putting together effective research designs, finding funding, and balancing workloads. Finally, these major themes were accompanied by subsequent responses important to the survey takers related to recommendations for the field, dissemination of knowledge, and important contexts for research.

With the submission of this report, next steps include interpreting these findings and considering the implications related to putting together a set of research priorities for the field of TESOL over the next five years, both within a working group focused on setting research priorities for TESOL as well as through consultations with the wider TESOL membership (e.g., focus groups, interviews, and other means). In particular, implications related to policies, services, programming, and teacher development as they connect to a set of future research priorities can all be considered as part of the task of developing a set of research priorities.