TEFL recruitment

Ross Thorburn asks whether we are still racist.

Ross Thorburn started in language education in 2006. He now leads a materials design team in Beijing, China. Ross has a Trinity DipTESOL, FTCL TESOL and UQ IDLTM and produces a podcast for ESL teachers, trainers and managers at www.tefltraininginstitute.com.

It is sixty years since Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat, fifty-five years since Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech and ten years since Barack Obama first entered the Oval Office. You might think that, by now, we'd have racism under control. We don't. In fact, racial discrimination in recruitment in the US has not improved since 1989 (Quillian *et al.* 2017).

What about discrimination in TEFL recruitment? We know that our industry discriminates against non-native English teachers (Richardson 2016), but what about good old, garden-variety racism? One ex-colleague in Beijing summarised her school's requirements for teachers in four words: 'Teaching experience, not black.' I've seen similar policies elsewhere in China, and heard similar stories from elsewhere in Asia. But are these cases the exception or the rule?

Research methods

To try to answer this question, I created CVs for two fictitious teachers with similar qualifications. Both CVs listed 120-hour online TEFL qualifications and 2:1 bachelor's degrees from UK universities: Edinburgh and Leeds. The primary difference between the teachers was their skin colour: one was black, the other white.

Previous studies into the effect of race on recruitment have used similar CVs with ethnically distinct names to apply for identical jobs (Ojha and Syal 2009; Nunley *et al.* 2014). As distinctive names may be too subtle for many EFL schools, I used applicant photos in addition to ethnically distinct names to investigate the effect of race on recruitment.

I used the CVs to apply for 250 jobs advertised on Dave's ESL Cafe's job boards: 100 in China, 100 in Korea and 50 in Europe. Both the 'black' and the 'white' CV were submitted for each job. For fairness, the photos and names were swapped on 50 per cent of the CVs (in case some TEFL schools prefer graduates from Edinburgh over Leeds).

> *The more diverse the organisation, the better their competitive positioning relative to other firms in the same industry*

Results and discussion

The results show a strong preference for white teachers in Asia—see Figure 1. The white candidate received 64 per cent more positive responses from schools in China and 33

per cent more from schools in Korea. Schools in Europe sent an equal number of positive responses to both candidates—see Figure 2.

The results from China and Korea are similar to a 2009 UK study which found that white applicants were 78 per cent more likely to receive a positive response to their application (Ojha and Syal 2009). It might be assumed that recruiters' prejudices are to blame. However, an American study (Nunley et al. 2014) found recruiter bias was not the prime culprit. Their investigation found that black applicants faced substantial discrimination when applying for customer facing jobs, but almost no discrimination when applying for jobs that were not client facing. The same phenomenon could explain some of the results here—few professions interact more with customers than teachers.

Although many schools in Asia may be concerned that black teachers are bad for business, an article (Herring 2009) in the American Sociological Review found that racial diversity is a strong predictor of a company's success. The
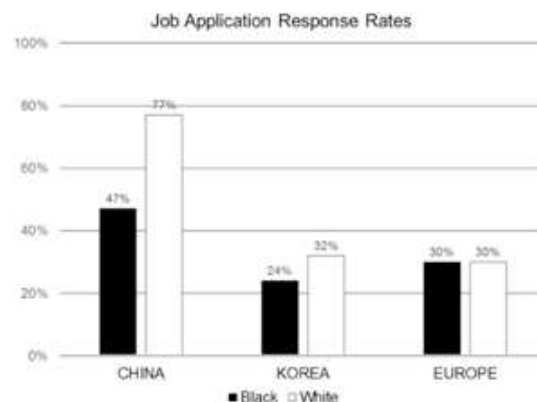

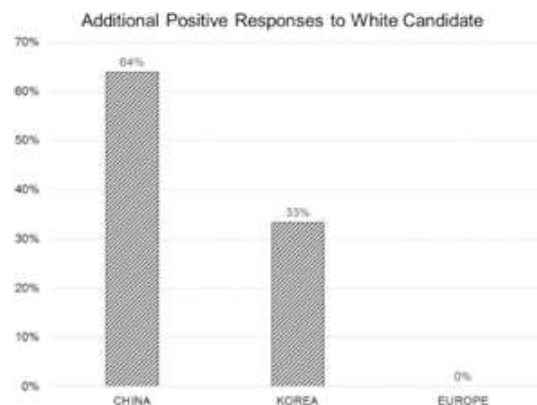*Figure 1: Percentages of responses to job applications*

Figure 2: Additional positive responses to white applicant (as a percentage)

more diverse the organisation, the better their competitive positioning relative to other firms in the same industry. It remains to be seen whether this phenomenon is also true in TEFL.

However, there is hope. China and Korea do not represent the entire world. The European schools investigated here did not discriminate on race. Further studies in other markets could reveal more about the extent of this problem.

Though most TEFL employers don't state preferences for race on job boards in the same way they state preferences for native English-speaking teachers, the TEFL industry continues to harbour attitudes and processes which contribute to racial discrimination. This submerged part of the iceberg must be raised before it can be cracked.

ross.thorburn@yahoo.com

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Recycling recent vocabulary

Şenel Yalçın uses an integrative lesson plan.

Şenel Yalçın, who has been teaching English for seven years, received her BA and MA in English Language Education in Turkey. She is also certified to teach Turkish as a Second Language. Working as an English instructor at the English preparatory school of a university in Istanbul, she is concurrently taking the second module of Delta.

Introduction

Transferring words from passive vocabulary into active vocabulary is a challenge that many foreign language learners face. I created the following lesson plan for my young adult learners who are studying at the English preparatory school of our university. They are currently studying B1 level and, after completing the one-year programme, they will start their undergraduate education. Learning vocabulary is a significant component of our curriculum, and learners are provided with a word list in every module, which is referred to for creating tests by the testing unit.

The following set of activities do not only endeavour to serve the learning of vocabulary, they also integrate multiple skills and systems into a lesson plan. By the end of the lesson, students will have practised speaking, listening, writing, reading, grammar and vocabulary in varying amounts. Besides, they will have used some of the vocabulary in context, which is usually desired for better comprehension.

More specifically, this lesson plan aims to revise and practice the meaning and use of recently introduced vocabulary. Therefore, it is assumed that learners have been introduced the target vocabulary before.

Lesson plan

Level: B1 and higher
Length: 45 minutes approximately
Materials: For a group of 16–20 students (numbers can be adapted for different class sizes)

- Post-it (or similar) sticky notes
- 4 sheets of A4 size paper
- Tack-it or tape
- 4 copies of the marking criteria

Procedures:

Before the class

Prepare post-it notes with a word and its form on them. The number of notes should match the number of students present in class.

Think of four possible categories that the target vocabulary could fit into. These might be global issues, travel, shopping etc. Write each of these category names on a different sheet of A4 paper as headings.

During the class

Mingling phase

- Give students the list of recently learned vocabulary, with definitions if possible and tell them to go over the words in two minutes individually and quietly.
- Next, give every student one post-it note and make sure each student understands the word on it.
- The next step is a mingling taboo game. Demonstrate this with a student.