

and with the support of PDPs, to reflect on aspects of these. We hoped that discussing emergent issues with PDPs would enable the teachers to (a) step back from their current practices to ascertain where they stand, with a certain regard and at a certain point in their careers, as compared to where they wish to be and (b) consider alternative actions, unavailable to them prior to their noticing and their deliberations, in order to reduce the gap between the current and the ideal. The main aim of the event was to promote learnacy by involving the teachers in on-going, self-directed and noticing-driven pursuits as a means of maintaining high levels of professional awareness to keep away from comfortable (numbing?) habits, while honing their skills to also support the development of others, e.g. colleagues, students, parents.



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Biodata

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A report on 'Teachers Research! Istanbul 2017'

Chris Banister



The 'Teachers Research!' 2017 Conference provided a forum for teacher researchers and their mentors to share and disseminate research *by teachers for teachers and their students*. Now in its third year, the conference was hosted by Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul, Turkey, and supported by IATEFL ReSIG. Building on the success of previous events, this year's conference saw over 120 attendees from Turkey and beyond gather on the banks of the Bosphorus to exchange perspectives on the classroom research endeavour and 'make public' their understanding. The conference foregrounds issues of interest to teachers and their students, viewing teachers as knowledge creators and advantageously positioned insiders with the potential to enhance the teaching and learning experience for all classroom participants. As such, it represents a confluence of teaching, learning and research.

The conference got underway on Friday 2nd June at 10 am with an opening address and a typically warm Turkish welcome from the Director of the Institute.

Chairs Kenan Dikilitaş and Richard Smith then sketched the history of the local Turkish teacher research movement and placed it within the wider international context. They also highlighted a number of journals and publications which feature and actively promote teacher research.

Gary Barkhuizen's opening plenary



Then it was on to the first plenary delivered by Gary Barkhuizen. Gary's session was entitled 'Teacher Identities, Short Stories and Teacher Research: Tangled up in Blue'. He first discussed the seven facets of teacher identity (ranging from 'embodied' to 'imagined'). Then, in a poignant section of his talk, Gary used a short story approach (short data extracts taken from bigger datasets like interviews or written accounts) to illustrate the changes in and developing identity of a high school teacher in New Zealand as she harnessed her pedagogic skills to the benefit of her wider community. I found Gary's plenary incredibly thought-provoking as he talked about aspects of teacher identity which I had not previously considered in depth such as the 'imagined future self'. When captured and harnessed, such conceptualisations can become powerful drivers for professional development.

Following a coffee and networking break, the conference moved to its first round of concurrent sessions, placing the teacher researchers centre stage. An innovation of this year's event was the theming of these concurrent sessions under topics ranging from 'Teacher Cognition' and 'Learner Attitudes' to 'Language' and 'Language Skills'. The 'Engagement and Participation' session featured presentations on 'Using educational games to teach grammar and increase learners' engagement' and 'Can team teaching promote learner participation and interaction in class? If so, how?' Suffice to say, these poster presentations by teachers were in themselves very engaging and prompted plenty of interaction amongst fellow delegates as they circulated around the rooms. The allotted discussion time never seemed enough with many conversations spilling over into the lunch break taken on the venue terrace.

Another innovation at this year's conference was the inclusion of a large number of pre-service teachers and

their mentors. In the afternoon breakout sessions I attended a talk by one of these future teachers, Seyda Kiliç, intriguingly entitled 'The 'trap' in disguise'. This was a critical, no-holds barred perspective on some of the professional challenges facing an in-service teacher Seyda had observed, and which provoked plenty of debate in the room. In all the sessions I attended, the wrap-up at the end with the moderator drew things to a satisfying conclusion and it was clear that the teacher researchers appreciated the valuable feedback and comments they received from both the moderator and their peers.

Day one continued with further coffee and networking opportunities followed by four concurrent workshop options for attendees. In one of these Richard Smith and Claudia Bustos Moraga talked about 'Exploratory Action Research for Professional Development'. Claudia, from Chile but currently based in the UK, described the challenge of designing a teacher research model for a Latin American secondary school context where teachers face long working days, high contact hours and large class sizes. She described how this was implemented using Exploratory Action Research (EAR), a relatively new member of the teacher research family which sits somewhere between Action Research and Exploratory Practice.

Claudia Bustos Moraga and Richard Smith talking about EAR



Three further workshops featured Flávia Vieira discussing 'Pedagogical inquiry in initial teacher education: setting an agenda for reflection and action', Mark Wyatt on 'Getting to understand our students better through qualitative research' and Anne Burns on 'Analysing qualitative data in action research'.

At the end of a fulfilling first day, many attendees joined the organisers on a boat trip from the venue along the Bosphorus. Cruising between the European and Asian sides of the city whilst sipping Turkish tea, delegates enjoyed views of the city skyline on a pleasant summer's

evening. Back on dry land, dinner brought a very full first day of the event to a close.

The second day began bright and early at 9am with another series of workshops. As someone keen to disseminate their practitioner research, I elected to attend Carol Griffiths' session on 'Writing up your teacher-research and getting it published'. Carol, herself an experienced writer of ELT materials and articles, provided an insider's view into some of the review and editing processes. She outlined basic steps that teacher researchers could follow to maximise the chances of getting their work published (e.g. follow the formatting guidelines to the letter to show you are someone who will be easy to work with, cite articles from the journal in question to boost their impact factor). Carol also suggested publications particularly receptive to teacher researcher submissions and offered advice on title design and the content of abstracts. Finally, Carol reiterated that no matter who you are, you will at some stage be rejected and whilst this is initially disappointing, it is best taken as a valuable learning opportunity and that perseverance is key. The talk was well-received, extremely practical and the audience took the opportunity to share their ideas for future submissions and reflect on past experiences, both positive and negative. Additional workshops saw Olcay Sert focus on 'Video Enhanced Observation and teacher research', Cem Can and Kenan Dikilitaş present their research on 'Developing corpus of our students: evidence for understanding and action', and Gary Barkhuizen's session looking at 'Narrative inquiry for language teaching research'. As the titles demonstrate, the workshops offered something to a broad spectrum of teacher-researchers and this variety was highlighted by many delegates as a strength of the conference.

Next, Mark Wyatt and Kenan Dikilitaş energised the audience with a lively reflection on the previous day's discussions and introduced Saturday's first invited speaker, Flávia Vieira from Universidade do Minho, Portugal, providing her perspective on 'Pedagogical inquiry in initial teacher education: transformative potential and critical issues'. Flavia detailed the valuable contribution that student teacher research made to the development of an inquiry-based culture of teaching and professional development at her institution and considered some of the debates sparked off by teacher research.

After a break for refreshment, another tranche of concurrent teacher-researcher presentations took place. Sezer Alper Zereyalp presented his ideas about 'Using online applications as alternative tools for retention of new vocabulary'. As vocabulary learning and teaching is of particular interest to me, I wanted to know more about why and how Sezer had implemented his research around "Quizlet". Sezer noted that this App boosted his students' motivation to learn new lexis due to the fun element that it brought into their learning.

Anne Burns, from the University of New South Wales, Australia, delivered the final plenary with her talk on 'Supporting teachers to do practitioner research: Some lessons learned and some questions to consider'. Anne reiterated the tremendous positives that engagement with and in research can deliver. However, she also outlined some potential pitfalls for budding teacher researchers such as assumptions they may have about research and issues in the writing-up stage. Importantly, as Yasmin Dar (University of Leicester) noted, Anne also suggested potential solutions such as holding workshops for those embarking on their new teacher research journeys. At one point Anne was joined on stage by a surprise guest, one of the local street cats that had wandered in off the street! Teachers Research truly is an inclusive event and needless to say, Ann took it all in her stride!

In the final round of teacher-researcher presentations, the 'Language Skills' themed session saw Olga Kunt talking about her creative approach to summary writing and Ferah Senaydin explaining the Impacts of the Strategic Self-Regulation Model on students' oral performance. Simon Mumford discussed 'Understanding EAP students' perceptions on presentations'. In another session, Yasmin Dar reported how she was inspired by Cemile Dogan's (Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya) talk on her engagement with the Turkish teacher-research community, which had prompted her to set up a local mentoring programme. She supported teacher-researchers in conducting action research via Exploratory Practice, which she found a challenging and novel process.

To ensure the fruitful dialogue between attendees and organisers would be ongoing, and with an eye already on next year's event, delegates were invited to offer their feedback. Suggestions for future events included the possibility of live streaming to make the conference even more inclusive. Reflecting on this year's event, one pre-service teacher voiced her appreciation to the organisers for "creating a confident and collaborative space...to share practices" and overall, attendee feedback was very positive. Suggestions for future events included the possibility of live streaming to make the conference even more inclusive. The conference was described as "inspiring, uplifting and energising" and the atmosphere as "welcoming" and "positive". Commenting on the atmosphere, Olga Kunt (Cukurova University, Adana), felt that "everyone who came could enjoy international and intercultural communication and the ambience." The atmosphere certainly is unique and it was this which encouraged me to get involved as a committee member after attending last year. I can say in all honesty that there are few ELT conferences where the plenary speakers are so involved at ground level and so accessible and willing to discuss and share their ideas about classroom based research. This is just one of the

aspects which, for me, makes Teachers Research! a must attend event.

In a fitting final touch, chairs Richard Smith and Kenan Dikilitaş invited the pre-service teachers and local undergraduate students who had volunteered to help with the conference down onto the stage to take a collective bow for all their efforts and hard work.

Teachers Research! 2017 drew to a close with attendees enriched by the breadth and depth of professional practice which had been explored and disseminated. However, it is perhaps the way that the event brings together such a wide range of perspectives from the multiple roles that comprise the teacher research community that makes it so special; whether an academic or teacher, mentor or mentee, pre-service or in-service practitioner, all participants enjoyed submerging themselves in their passion for research and recognised the value and understanding which accrued. Ferah Senaydin (Ege University, Izmir) summed up the feeling of many present: “The conference definitely exceeded my expectations! It [a] nourishing event. I felt so motivated and returned home inspired to make a difference.” Another participant pointed out: “It was really amazing how we could 'breathe' research for two days. The poster presentations, the workshops or plenary speakers' presentations fed informal discussions about research.” (Claudia Bustos Moraga, University of Leeds). It may well be that these ad-hoc exchanges had already sown the seeds of future inquiry for the year ahead ready to share at Teachers Research! 2018.

Delegates enjoying a post-conference boat cruise



Biodata

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My impressions of the Teachers Research Conference - Istanbul 2017

Claudia Bustos-Moraga

In teacher research, teachers as researchers become an integral part of the process. My first impression of the Teacher Research Conference 2017 Istanbul, was that its structure coherently reflected that principle: all participants were an integral part of the conference. All of us shared our research from a 'first-person' perspective making public the knowledge we acquired for everyone's benefit. We were all special and unique, and this feeling of 'uniqueness' made it possible for the conference to truly be 'participant-centred'. The teacher-researchers were the ones 'holding the microphone' to share their experiences. Important names in the field, such as Anne Burns, Gary Barkhuizen, Richard Smith, Flávia Vieira, and Mark Wyatt, became members of the audience, showing great interest in each presentation. A second element was the diversity of the participants.

The researchers were academics, in-service teachers, and future teachers of English. Some students had conducted their research as part of a university course, some driven by their desire to explore and learn. Some projects were carried out by academics and their students. With these examples, I could see how the concept of teacher research expands to practitioner research: it is not only teachers, the learners -as learners of teaching in this case- become practitioners too. This new learning connects with my interest in teacher education, since the conference allowed me to see ways in which both teachers and learners share the experience of doing research.

Another interesting feature was that the audience engagement in the presentations was not exclusively in the outcomes, but mainly in the process. Most of the discussions were centred on the reasons which drove us to research a particular issue, and all the learning that happened over the course of our research, the decisions we made and the questioning process that led to those decisions. The specific outcomes and suggestions of each project are immensely valuable for a specific context; however, the processes that led to those outcomes and conclusions, have helped us to develop a set of skills that are not project-specific. I am not sure that we could have reached the same level of awareness, had not it been for the emphasis of this in post-presentation discussions and the reflection these discussions promoted.

The plenary speakers' presentations were also inspiring. They offered me the opportunity to approach my own research from a new perspective, which was very stimulating. I am sure many participants had a similar experience. I could see how many of us could interact with the plenary speakers (A. Burns, G. Barkhuizen, F. Vieira) and other academics discussing research issues and puzzles that we face. Similarly, the workshops were a great opportunity for learning and exchanging experiences. Although time is never enough, they provided a hands-on chance to improve our research skills.

One of the reasons why I wanted to attend the conference was to share my experience and connect our work with teachers doing exploratory action research (EAR) in Chilean schools, with experiences in different contexts. The conference showed how the culture of practitioner research is growing in Turkey, and I could show what we have been doing in Chile. I received feedback that I can now share and bring back to Chile. The interaction with teachers from other places expanded my understanding of our work in Chile, which was by far the most valuable learning experience. I look forward to sharing these new understandings with Chilean practitioners.

Biodata

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My Impressions of the 'Teachers Research!' conference (Istanbul, June 2017)

Cemile Buğra

I have been attending 'Teachers Research' conferences for the last three years. They have been supported by IATEFL ReSIG and held in Turkey, this year at

Bahcesehir University in Istanbul. These conferences are fulfilling in various ways.

Things I like in general include the following: Firstly, the conference encourages sharing amongst teachers from different schools and universities through plenary speeches, valuable workshops and poster presentations. Secondly, it is beneficial with regard to developing teacher identity as learners, practitioners, and researchers. Additionally, we have a chance to meet teacher trainers and editors from IATEFL at the conference. Furthermore, one of the most distinguishing features of this annual conference is that instead of receiving knowledge from experts, as teachers we are on the stage sharing our own ideas, practices, and real classroom experiences.



Regarding highlights of this particular conference, first of all, the plenary speeches shed light on some new issues. Especially, I was really impressed by the visual presentation of Gary Barkhuizen whose speech was entitled 'Teacher identities, short stories, and teacher research: Tangled up in blue'. It was an inspiring talk since it expanded our knowledge about how we shape our practice and what key roles we have as teachers; it emphasized the importance of experimentation through becoming a teacher researcher.

Also, I was able to attend two different workshops given by plenary speakers this year and one of them – 'Narrative inquiry for language teaching research' - was also conducted by Gary Barkhuizen. In this workshop we

focused on making use of narrative inquiry and I was really inspired. The other one was conducted by Flávia Vieira – ‘Pedagogical inquiry in initial teacher education: setting an agenda for reflection and action’. I felt I really developed a critical insight into teacher education in these workshops. For me, it was stimulating to learn more about new trends and to explore a wide range of topics; the workshops awakened our curiosity through cultivating new mental perspectives such as narrative inquiry. Simply, they were really practical for understanding how to identify future problems and conduct research accordingly.

Moreover, I would like to touch upon another issue. Last year, Assist Prof. Sehnaz Sahinkarakaş involved her undergraduate students in carrying out research and encouraged them to attend the conference to present their studies at the end of the practicum. I think that it was an inspiring experience for prospective teachers. And I saw that more teacher candidates from different universities attended the conference this year. So, I felt exhilarated on behalf of them since they had started this journey at an early point in their careers. In my opinion, teacher research should actually be a part of pre-service teacher education so that the number of teachers who are qualified and solution-oriented will hopefully increase.

As teachers we are the actual practitioners of learning; that is why we should be on the stage to share our experiences with others.

*“First, let the teachers take the stage,
Do not let them stay backstage,
Let the teachers open a new page,
They will lead us to a golden age.”*



Biodata

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On Action Research: Poetic Impressions

Cemile Buğra

Besides providing impressions (largely in prose) of the ‘Teachers Research’ conference in Istanbul, 2017 (page 26, above), Cemile Buğra has also supplied poetic impressions of doing action research (below). During the conference, there was some discussion about producing research in innovative ways (after ELTED 20) and indeed in one session I solicited creative writing for ELT Research. Cemile responded immediately, noting down and then sharing a draft of one of the poems below to a group of us at the back of the hall, not long after I had finished speaking. We agreed it was fun. ‘You’ll have to publish it now’, said Richard Smith. A pleasure to do so! (MW)

Action! Come on! Go on!

Let's identify what is missing,
This is not only the beginning,
Stop and check how it is going,
Boost your energy, time is running.

Do not feel in the middle of nowhere,
You are just in the right place, there,
Be positive and feel what you have,
Don't worry about what you don't have.

Could AR be a good route to finding your way?
It is never too late to start somewhere,
Now, take action and question your day,
You will find what you are looking for in a way.
Action! Come on! Go on!

Awaken and Rise up!

Why don't we take an action then, all together?
Do not ever hesitate to take one step further,
Never forget that you are a life-long learner,
Go beyond your limits, you are an explorer.

No regrets and loss, just try again and again,
Decide here and now, also what to do when,
Tomorrow is not late, but punctuality is great!
So, don't waste time! Write your aims with a pen.