



ELT RESEARCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IATEFL RESEARCH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP



January 2015 Issue 30

01 Richard Smith - *Message from the coordinator*

Articles et cetera

- 02 Christina Gkonou and Mark Daubney - *Insights into language learning psychology: Bringing in teachers' perspectives*
06 Felicity Kjisik and Leena Karlsson - *Watching our words: Researching and developing language counselling*
09 Darren Elliott - *Categorisation of metaphors for learning*

Practitioner Research

- 16 Wayne Trotman - *The road to Gediz*
17 Katie Moran - *Exploratory/action research to improve oral presentations with French university students: Two cycles*

Roundtable Discussion Report

- 21 Richard Smith and Gosia Sky - *The state of ELT research in the UK (Part II)*

Conference Reports

- 25 Mark Daubney - *Classroom-oriented research: Reconciling theory and practice (14-16 October 2013, Konin, Poland)*
28 Sujata Noronha and Robert Slattery - *Innovating in ELT research: TEC14 pre-conference event (20 February 2014, Hyderabad, India)*
30 Richard Smith and Ana Inés Salvi - *IATEFL ReSIG pre-conference event 'Teachers Research!' (1 April 2014, Harrogate, UK)*
31 Obie Noe B. Madalang - *'Teacher Researchers in Action' (27-28 June 2014, Gediz University, Izmir, Turkey)*

Outreach

- 33 Harry Kuchah - *An interim report on the CAMELTA Teacher Association Research project (progress report)*
34 Loreto Aliaga, Maria Jesus Inostroza, Paula Rebolledo, Gloria Romero and Pia Tabali - *RICELT: Creating a research community in Chilean ELT*
36 Details of the forthcoming IATEFL Research SIG Day (12 April 2015, Manchester, UK)
37 Back to the front cover

About the IATEFL Research SIG

The IATEFL Research SIG (ReSIG) is a unique forum for the discussion of issues connected with research into (or relating to) ELT, bringing together teachers, teacher-researchers, teacher educators and researchers from around the world. In this active community, members share their experiences of research, as well as findings from and interpretations of research, and network face-to-face at regular events, online via our discussion list, and in print via *ELT Research*.



If you are a teacher interested in investigating your own practice, a researcher involved in other kinds of ELT inquiry, a teacher educator engaging others in research or not a researcher but curious about what research is and how you can get involved with and in it, then the Research SIG is for you! Our members come from all around the world and we have a large and diverse committee, reflecting our desire to be as open to members' initiative as much as possible.

If you enjoy reading this issue and would like to subscribe and/or join us at future events, you can find out more about how to become a member of ReSIG via our website: resig.iatefl.org (in the section titled 'Join us').

You can renew your membership of IATEFL or become a new member of IATEFL (and the Research SIG) online via www.iatefl.org or you can contact IATEFL Head Office at:

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For more information about ReSIG see our website: resig.iatefl.org

About *ELT Research*

Submissions for *ELT Research*, published two to three times a year by the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group (SIG), should be sent to resig@iatefl.org. Please visit the SIG website (resig.iatefl.org) for author guidelines (under 'Publications').

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Editing and layout

This issue was edited by Ana Inés Salvi, Gosia Sky and Richard Smith. Picture on the front cover by Guillermina Victoria, reproduced with kind permission of the artist (<http://wilhelmina18.wix.com/arte-victoria>).

From the coordinator

Dear RESEARCH SIG members,

There's been lots of Research SIG activity since the last issue. Apart from a February 2014 one-day workshop we supported in India (see essays by Sujata Noronha and Robert Slattery here), activities outside Europe have included initial support for a Teacher Association Research project in Cameroon and a new ELT research association in Chile (RICELT). These initiatives are reported on in this issue by Harry Kuchah (ReSIG's Outreach coordinator) and by the RICELT committee (including ReSIG committee members Maria Jesus Inostroza and Paula Rebolledo), respectively.

April 1st 2014 brought *Teachers Research!* – our Pre-Conference Event (PCE) in Harrogate – an innovative participant-centred day of posters, discussions, and insights from guest commentators Dick Allwright, Anne Burns and Donald Freeman, bringing to a focus the work the SIG has been doing promoting practitioner research over the last few years. You can see an audio-visual record on our website (<http://resig.iatefl.org>), and presentations are currently being edited for an e-book publication later this year. Committee members Sarah Brewer, Sarah Mercer and Yasmin Dar are now working very hard to organize our 2015 PCE 'Developing as a Researcher' (see back cover), which will again feature poster presentations combined with guest commentary. Daniel Xerri, the SIG's electronic manager, is organizing filming of parts of the day for those unable to attend. As this year's PCE will show, ReSIG isn't just about supporting teacher-research – we also have a mission to support the development of novice and junior researchers, as well as more experienced investigators, whatever the kind of ELT research they're engaging in.

At last year's IATEFL conference we also ran a well-attended 'SIG Day' featuring specially selected presentations. These were all video-recorded and uploaded to the website (URL above). A highlight was our 'Open Forum', attended by about 40 SIG members – thanks for coming! Several of the articles in this issue arose from presentations originally given during the SIG Day, and we're now looking forward to the SIG Day in Manchester, which will be on Sunday 12th April 2015. Please peruse the programme at the end of the newsletter and join us if you can. Especially, come along to our Open Forum from 15:50 to 16:35 – this is a chance to have your say about the activities of the SIG, to get further involved and to meet other members. If you can't attend but would like something to be discussed please get in touch (via resig@iatefl.org).

Many thanks go to Mark Daubney, Mirosław Pawlak and Atanu Bhattacharya who left the committee around the time of the conference. Welcome, though, to Yasmin Dar, Maria Jesus Inostroza and Mark Wyatt! Photos and

further details of the current committee can be found here: <http://resig.weebly.com/committee>. A most important and welcome recent development is that Sarah Mercer – whose commitment to the SIG has been unwavering over the years – has recently agreed to become joint coordinator with me, and this will ensure a smooth transition when I later step down.

In June we supported the 'Teacher Researchers in Action' conference, organized annually over the last few years by Kenan Dikilitaş and the teachers he mentors at Gediz University, Izmir, Turkey. For the first time, this was an international conference, and ReSIG's scholarship winner Obie Noe B. Madalang travelled from the Philippines to be there (his report is well worth reading, as is Wayne Trotman's description of his own (much shorter) 'road to Gediz'). The conference papers are currently being edited and will come out as an e-book later in the year. We expect that from this year the conference will be a full SIG event, and want it to become an annual event – the only annual conference dedicated to TESOL teacher-research in fact. To these ends, Kenan Dikilitaş was recently welcomed onto the ReSIG committee. The dates for the 2015 conference are 18th-19th June, and plenary talks will be given by Anne Burns, Judith Hanks and Mark Wyatt.

Further details of the 2015 Izmir teacher-research conference will be posted in messages to members, on our Facebook page and in our Yahoo!Group (please consider joining these, by the way, if you have not done so already, and encourage others to join – details on the website! Our Facebook group now has 650 members, up from the 250 reported in the last issue). We have developed a strong online presence via these groups and via our website, ably maintained by Christina Gkonou. In August we also supported a webinar series organized by Macquarie University, Australia – thanks to Phil Chappell for helping us to arrange this link-up. We've also had several interesting discussions of freely available research articles in our Yahoo!Group, which Mark Wyatt has been organizing. And in the next issue there'll be a report of a ReSIG-supported one-day workshop led by Simon Borg in October in Malta.

Behind the scenes there's been important work by Deb Bullock penning announcements in IATEFL *Voices* and e-bulletin, Siân Etherington keeping our finances ship-shape, Sandie Mourão maintaining our list of members, Shelagh Rixon keeping governance on the straight and narrow, and Larysa Sanotska looking after scholarship competitions. Finally, thanks to Ana and Gosia for their great work alongside me on the newsletter – we've self-indulgently featured ourselves at the back, this being my last issue as co-editor!

In fact, many thanks to all the committee for their continuing hard work! You've been great to work with!

Richard Smith, Research SIG joint coordinator
(Email: resig@iatefl.org)

Articles et cetera

At every IATEFL conference, the Research SIG committee selects a number of submitted papers specifically for its 'track' at the conference. This then constitutes a day of presentations and workshops. The first two articles in this section are the written forms of papers presented during Research SIG Day at the 2014 IATEFL Conference in Harrogate. These are followed by a different kind of contribution from Darren Elliott...

Insights into language learning psychology: Bringing in teachers' perspectives

Christina Gkonou (University of Essex, UK) and Mark Daubney (Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal)

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Introduction

Language learning psychology (LLP) is "concerned with the mental experiences, processes, thoughts, feelings, motives, and behaviours of individuals involved in language learning" (Mercer et al., 2012: 2). In fact, it seems clear that success in language learning depends "less on material, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between people in the classroom" (Stevick, 1980: 4). This article reports on the methodology and some preliminary findings of an ongoing research project aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives on LLP and at suggesting a range of possible intervention strategies that could inform classroom pedagogy. Our main aim for the methodological design was to create data collection instruments with 'participant benefits' (Smith & Anmpalagan, 2013), by listening to teacher voices regarding the field of LLP whilst simultaneously conducting research that would give teachers something back. In what follows, we outline the research design for our two-phase project, explain the (intended) 'participant benefits' for each phase, and share data from foreign language teachers in Austria, Portugal and Greece in a preliminary fashion.

This is a report of 'work in progress', since only the first phase of the project has been completed. The

interviews with teachers, which constitute the second phase, have already been conducted and transcribed but not yet fully analysed. Our workshop at the Harrogate IATEFL 2014 conference aimed to gain participants' feedback about the general thrust and aims of the project as a whole, and to help us refine our ideas for the second phase data analysis.

Research design

The first phase aimed to establish which aspects of LLP teachers felt were priorities in their own teaching contexts. The research questions that guided this stage were the following:

1. Which aspects of LLP do teachers feel are especially important and relevant for their setting?
2. Are there any differences in teacher priorities according to school level (i.e. primary, secondary, and tertiary)?

For this first stage, we designed an online questionnaire using SurveyMonkey. The questionnaire comprised a basic biodata section (including questions about the participants' age, gender, level of teaching, teaching experience and languages taught), and fourteen items about key LLP constructs drawn from Dörnyei (2005) and Mercer et al. (2012). Each item included a brief definition of a construct (e.g. self-concept, motivation, language learning strategies etc.), and teachers were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale how important each of these constructs was for their setting. At the end of the questionnaire, we also included an open-ended question, which asked participants to select the two constructs that are most important for them and to explain why. The 'participant benefit' in this phase was an annotated bibliography about useful books for teaching practice addressing some of these constructs. The questionnaire was sent to primary, secondary and tertiary level teachers in Austria, Portugal and Greece. On the basis of the participants' responses, seven LLP constructs were prioritised. These will be discussed in the results section below.

The research design for the second phase built on the findings gained in phase one. Here, the research questions were:

1. What do teachers believe about the constructs? (Only the seven constructs prioritised during the first phase)
2. What experiences have they had in respect to them?
3. What are their teaching practices in respect to them?

Taking into account the biodata collected in the first phase, we decided to ask secondary school teachers to participate in the second part as they represented the

majority of language teachers across all three teaching contexts. Semi-structured interviews were employed for data collection, and the interview protocol included questions on the teachers' background, their teaching context, and their beliefs, experiences, and practices regarding LLP in general and the seven constructs in particular. A consent form was signed by both teachers and researchers. Subsequent to the interviews, the participants were given the opportunity to meet the researchers to share insights and materials with them, and we hoped this would constitute a 'participant benefit', by bridging the gap between researchers and teachers, and countering the notion that researchers simply 'take' from those involved in their projects, and that participants – and researchers – can, in fact, mutually profit from working together.

The first author of this report, for example, met up with some of the teachers who had been interviewed to discuss the project in more detail, and how the constructs influence their classroom practice and what strategies they might use to harness and enhance positive aspects of LLP in their own classrooms. Again, the notion of listening to teachers, as well as bridging

the gap between researchers and teachers, was a key factor in organising these meetings. These meetings were not, strictly speaking, part of the data collection process, but they provided opportunities for informal discussions that might yield insights for possible future research projects.

Phase 1 – Results

The data analysis for the first phase was undertaken using SPSS version 16.0. Descriptive statistics were used to present and describe data in terms of the teachers' priorities in regard to the LLP constructs in their settings and also in terms of differences in their priorities according to school type. 311 questionnaires were analysed.

For the first research question, the scores for '1' ('extremely important') and '2' ('important') were aggregated for all school levels. Table 1 shows the aggregate scores for all fourteen constructs, with the five priorities printed in bold. The numbers in parentheses indicate the order of importance for the five constructs.

Table 1. Aggregate scores for all fourteen constructs.

	Extremely important	Important	Aggregate scores
Self-concept	118	96	214 (5)
Personality	108	98	206
Motivation	194	55	249 (1)
Mindsets	80	107	187
Attributions	64	80	144
Foreign language anxiety	81	75	156
Willingness to communicate	140	87	227 (2)
Learning strategies	125	81	206
Learning styles	95	97	192
Metacognition	58	83	141
Goals	102	98	200
Learner autonomy	109	90	199
Group dynamics	116	103	219 (4)
Emotions	140	82	222 (3)

Table 2. Differences in priorities according to school type.

Educational level	Most important constructs
Primary school (N = 55)	Motivation/Emotions Self-concept Group dynamics Learner autonomy
Secondary school (N = 187)	Motivation Willingness to communicate Learning strategies Emotions Group dynamics
Post-secondary education (N = 68)	Motivation Emotions Self-concept/Willingness to communicate Learner autonomy/Group dynamics

For these teachers, motivation was by some distance the most important LLP construct, followed by willingness to communicate, emotions, group dynamics and self-concept.

The quantitative data were also checked for differences in teachers' priorities according to three school levels, namely primary school, secondary school and post-secondary education. Table 2 presents the constructs rated as most important by teachers in all three school types at these three levels.

As can be seen from Table 2, there were minimal differences in teachers' opinions regarding the most important constructs in their teaching contexts. For this research question too, motivation was again rated as the most important construct by teachers of all three levels. For primary school teachers, in particular, emotions seemed to be equally as important as motivation (31 teachers rated each of these two constructs as extremely important). Secondary school teachers felt that willingness to communicate was the second most important variable they would attend to in their classes. In addition, learning strategies were another priority for them despite not featuring among the top five most important constructs for primary school teachers and teachers in tertiary education.

Teachers' answers to the open-ended question were analysed for common themes and recurring patterns using Atlas.ti. It should be noted here that almost half of the respondents skipped this question. The most important LLP constructs that emerged from this analysis were: motivation, emotions, group dynamics, learner autonomy, learning strategies, willingness to communicate and self-concept. Teachers seemed aware that the LLP aspects are context-specific, given their emphasis on the needs of different learners and on adjusting accordingly their teaching strategies to cater for these needs. They also commented on how they see the various facets of LLP as being interconnected:

"Some aspects kind of mutually influence each other."
(Teacher #38)

"Emotions cover many other points from the list."
(Teacher #120)

Further, the vast majority of teachers commented on their role as educators and the extent to which they are responsible for engendering positive emotions or increasing learners' motivation. The following quotes illustrate this point:

"Contrary to what some parents think, a teacher cannot motivate students, only tries to provide the circumstances in which students can motivate themselves." (Teacher #7)

"As a teacher, I can probably, partially at least, influence beliefs and also build on existing strategies; all this by my way of acting, most importantly also by reinforcing certain behaviour (monitoring, praising, assessment in general and above all descriptive feedback)." (Teacher #62)

"So when a student has an accurate picture of his performance and is determined to succeed by working on any weak points and does not give up, then, along with his teacher's guidance, he will manage to succeed." (Teacher #183)

Related to this, the amount of learner involvement, their willingness to work and to invest in their studies, and their level of engagement with the subject, were touched upon by a large number of teachers, thus demonstrating that metacognition and self-regulation were aspects that teachers aimed to enhance in learners:

"What and how much a student is willing to learn lies within her/his responsibility." (Teacher #3)

Phase 2 – Preliminary insights

Eleven foreign language teachers were interviewed: four working in Austria, four in Portugal and three in Greece. The interviews were transcribed and read carefully, and emerging themes noted and discussed in order to ensure researcher triangulation and a degree of coherence in the themes being identified. Though not fully analysed, we considered it important to include some of this interview data – emerging themes encapsulated in the voices of teachers – in our workshop at Harrogate, hence we report on these emerging themes here, in a preliminary fashion.

First, similarly to the open-ended question in the questionnaire for phase one, teachers appear to view the various aspects of LLP as highly interrelated and complex. This finding indicates that LLP could best be viewed from a holistic perspective as opposed to being seen as a set of separate domains. Second, teachers

have considerable knowledge about LLP, but this might not correspond to the terms and discourse used by researchers. Therefore, bridging the gap between teacher discourse and researcher discourse would appear to be a desirable goal. Third, teachers seemed to rely heavily on their experience and intuition in order to interpret student behaviour in class, signifying high degrees of emotional intelligence. Raising awareness of LLP through workshops and publications in newsletters and magazines could further enhance teachers' knowledge and expertise, and would encourage teachers to consider its different facets in their classroom practice. Finally, teacher psychology seemed to be crucial to classroom practice, and learner psychology was found to be heavily dependent on this. For example, teachers see their own commitment, engagement and motivation, as well as positive group dynamics, as direct influences on learners' levels of motivation, positive emotions and willingness to learn. Future studies could aim to explore some of the above variables from the teachers' perspective, for example by looking at whether a strong teacher self-concept could help towards boosting students' self-confidence or increasing their self-efficacy, or how positive and negative teacher emotions could influence students' emotions in and outside of class.

Our workshop

As stated in the Introduction, our workshop at the IATEFL 2014 conference in Harrogate aimed to gain participants' feedback about the project and to gain insights which would help us refine our ideas for subsequent work, as well as to provide 'participant benefits' in the form of a consciousness-raising task (completion and discussion of the questionnaire) and sharing of the bibliography originally prepared for project teachers. After completing the phase-one questionnaire, many participants expressed an idea that is common in the responses to the open-ended questions by teachers in our study – namely, that all the LLP constructs are important and interconnected, and that it is difficult to reach a decision on what the two most important constructs are in their given contexts. Participants' enthusiastic response to this project served to strengthen our conviction that it is relevant to a wider population. Furthermore, the fact that there were practitioners, not only researchers, attending the workshop fed directly into our desire to engage with and benefit practitioners as well as helping us to ascertain practitioners' views on LLP and its relevance to classroom practice.

Conclusion and future steps

Our findings suggest the field of LLP is broad and comprises a range of constructs, and viewing it as a complex system where all aspects interact and are interconnected is a fruitful research and practice trajectory, since maximising knowledge about our students is of crucial importance in any teaching context and level of education.

Regarding our next steps for this project, we plan to analyse the interview data. In turn, this could, on the basis of our findings, provide the foundations for further research and training. The former might include a questionnaire administered to a larger population of teachers in all three settings in order to explore strategies for addressing LLP, whilst the latter could be achieved through short training courses and workshops. Given our shared belief in the centrality of psychology in the process of language learning, our goal is to raise awareness of LLP, and, above all, to suggest ideas that can inform classroom pedagogy and practice, and the workshop we organized in Harrogate was a useful first step in this endeavour.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Sarah Mercer (University of Graz, Austria), the coordinator of this research project, for sharing her expertise and research experiences with us and encouraging us to do this workshop.

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Watching our words: Researching and developing language counselling

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Introduction

We work as language advisers/counsellors in the Autonomous Learning Modules (ALMS) at Helsinki University Language Centre. ALMS is a variety of English course offered by the Centre to undergraduates completing their English language requirements, and language counselling is one of the main forms of support for students as they pursue their learning programmes autonomously. ALMS promotes learner and teacher autonomy and provides one longstanding example of putting pedagogy for autonomy into practice (Karlsson, Kjisik & Nordlund, 1997). Here we first briefly describe our context of work, our research and pedagogical thinking. We then move on to describe the teacher development project (work in progress) on creating guidelines for gaining and improving counselling skills that we started in 2012. Our ReSIG Day workshop at IATEFL was based on the current stage of this reflection-oriented practitioner research project.

Context

More detailed accounts and descriptions of the complete ALMS programme and the role of counselling can be found elsewhere (Karlsson, Kjisik & Nordlund, 1997; Karlsson, Kjisik & Nordlund, 2007; Kjisik, 2007) but, in a nutshell, the key features of ALMS can be seen in Figure 1. It has to be remembered that no two individual programmes are identical because the students can choose to study alone, or in pairs or in groups, which they set up themselves, or join one of the teacher-facilitated Skills Support Groups.

In each university autumn or spring term we have approximately 200 students participating in ALMS, with at least one group for students of each of the eleven university Faculties and one group for self-identified 'different' learners. Supporting the students, there is a team of about ten teachers, who act as counsellors and facilitators of the Skills Support Groups. Teachers from the Language Centre English Unit (which numbers about 20 teachers in total) join the ALMS team if they

are interested in the concept and practice of autonomy and are open to teamwork, action research and exploratory practice. These have been essential characteristics of our particular community of practice, as we will discuss in the next section.

Figure 1. Key features of a 14-week ALMS module.

- Two initial learner awareness sessions (4hrs+2hrs) in groups of c. 20, led by one of the ALMS team of teachers/counsellors
- Learning histories discussed and written as free-form texts or using Kaleidoscope
(<http://h27.it.helsinki.fi/vkk/kaleidoskooppi/intro.php>)
- Personally meaningful goals and learning programmes. Extent of programme depends on number of credits required.
- Learning logs and diaries, with a focus on reflection on learning
- Skills Support Groups on a wide range of academic, professional and lifewide skills, teacher-facilitated to a greater or lesser extent
- Counselling: 3 individual 15 min. meetings per module:
 - 1st counselling focus on concept of autonomy, learning history and plan
 - 2nd counselling focus on work/learning progress and reflection
 - 3rd counselling focus on learning outcomes, learner identity and portfolio discussion

ALMS research and pedagogical development

The integral and complementary nature of ALMS practice and research has been a central tenet in our development work (Karlsson & Kjisik, 2009). We believe that both educational practice and research need to be, first and foremost, self-reflexive: we thus need to consider and reconsider our motivations all the way through any counselling or research process. Flávia Vieira (2007) writes about the braided nature of research and teacher development and their link to teacher autonomy. She suggests that teacher development, which is at the heart of pedagogy for autonomy, should be inquiry-oriented, experience-based, collective and locally relevant. Such teacher development supports teacher autonomy in terms of interpersonal empowerment, because it involves sharing experiences and interpretations and makes use of *lifewide* and *lifedeep* teacher knowledge (Karlsson & Kjisik, 2011)¹.

Current project (work in progress)

The original aim of our current project was to create a video and guidelines for novice counsellors. We obviously wanted to better understand our own work but, initially, the focus was on training needs. We felt that producing videos for new counsellors to watch would be ethically less demanding than organising live observation of students in their counselling sessions. After two years of taping, editing and discussion, we have produced two videos and a set of guidelines,

¹ *Lifewide* here refers to the totality of a person's learning in the different parts of her life, not only through formal learning. *Lifedeep* refers to our beliefs, values, feelings and orientations to life, all parts of our personality.

which we have presented to colleagues at various conferences in Finland and abroad, IATEFL 2014 being the latest. The professional sharing and discussions with our audiences and amongst the ALMS team have helped us to rethink and rewrite the guidelines. We are now relatively satisfied with the set of guidelines but recognise the need to continuously update the document as we continue the project.

The videos have worked well in the workshops we have given; they seem to capture the nature and reality of the ALMS counselling process and the experiential context of the discussions, even though they are a compilation of short extracts from counselling meetings. It has been rewarding to notice that the videos demonstrate how, on the landscape of counselling, there is no “solid single reality” of autonomy but, instead, “fluid multiple realities” (Aoki, 2008: 16). The two very different students in the two videos show some of the range of skills, personalities, needs and wishes of students that the counsellors encounter. The two counsellors in turn bring two counsellor identities with different lifewide and lifedeeep understandings into focus, and present two examples of choosing words and actions in a counselling meeting. The ReSIG Day workshop further convinced us that the videos provide a good basis for discussing good practices in counselling, in particular with colleagues who are less familiar with counselling as a way of supporting learner autonomy.

During the project, however, our focus has moved towards an exploratory orientation and to involving all our counsellors as learners of counselling, as key practitioners (Allwright & Hanks, 2009). This has happened because we are convinced that examples of counselling in action can only give a starting point for novice counsellors, and that it is indeed the practising counsellors, both new and old, who need to question their habitual actions and avoid becoming complacent in their work. Reflecting on the experiences and autobiographical understandings of counselling forms the basis of learning from the work and for the work.

In the past academic year, the ALMS team has explored the guidelines and discussed their relevance to our counselling practice in peer group mentoring (PGM) sessions. Peer group mentoring (see Heikkinen, Jokinen & Tynjälä, 2012) is an emerging approach in Finnish teacher development and induction, and has proven to be an excellent way for sharing ideas and experiences of different aspects of counselling. The PGM approach draws on an ideal of professional autonomy as collective meaning-making and will-formation, and we have found it to be in harmony with our own pedagogical thinking. In an atmosphere of confidence, trust and equality we have been able to candidly analyse our own counselling and to share our worries and concerns (wellbeing at work is an important aspect of the PGM model). Our discussions have mostly dealt with aspects of counselling that have also become

the focal elements in our guidelines: the elusive nature of autonomy, the challenges of active and appreciative listening, encouragement, and the support of reflection, to mention a few.

Our project will now continue with this new focus: we want to encourage our counsellors to record their own counselling sessions and to share them, in order to deepen their understanding of the counselling dialogue in action. We will continue our PGM meetings using the set of guidelines for reflection that has emerged from the professional sharing described above. We hope that these would also help individual counsellors and/or groups outside our Language Centre to better understand and cope with their practice.

Guidelines for reflection

The list below represents the gamut of ‘actions’ that we have come to see as significant elements of successful language counselling. Actions can be the words we use, the body language we radiate, the talk and the silence we create, the challenges we set and the patience we demonstrate – all of these can foster or hamper the dialogue. After initially creating a mind-map of bubbles of actions arising from our discussions and workshops, we have recently arranged them into the six groups seen below, although they are not presented here in any order of importance. The groups are necessarily overlapping and to some extent repetitive, but the six areas do seem to form a skeleton of vital and inter-connected counselling skills.

1. The balance of power/control
 - establishing rapport and positioning (roles)
 - showing respect
 - being genuine
 - asking questions
 - showing empathy, suspending judgement
2. Encouraging and developing the learner’s sense of autonomy
 - encouraging self-reflection
 - providing (meta)language needed by the learner
 - validating lifewide and lifedeeep experiences
 - giving specific advice
3. Motivating
 - showing commitment
 - being positive
 - being supportive
 - offering positive reinforcement and affirmation
 - encouraging self-reflection in learning
4. Listening
 - not interrupting
 - paraphrasing, reformulating
 - waiting, attending

- active listening
- mirroring, echoing
- asking for clarification
- not completing sentences

5. Storytelling

- 'remembering how'
- 'imagining what if'
- sharing memories and experiences
- considering the future (immediate and long-term)
- eliciting ideas for learning

6. Appreciation of diversity

- noticing the learner's being in the world
- promoting belief in self
- avoiding generalisations

We feel that when a counsellor is watching her words and actions, a powerful pedagogical dialogue can be built that, unlike the traditional forms of pedagogical discourse, is immediate, "embedded in the here and now of the teacher and her learners, focused on jointly understanding the process in which they are engaged" (Little, 2001: 50).

Conclusion

In this vignette, we have presented the ALMS programme and our counselling team as a learning community. The project on good counselling described in the text exemplifies reflection-oriented practitioner research, which combines collective research and critical exploration of practice. Presenting the project at IATEFL gave us yet another opportunity to share our ideas on counselling as pedagogical dialogue. We got fresh reactions to the guidelines and, as always, intriguing questions about counselling as a form of learner support.

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Have you thought about contributing to *ELT Research* ?

As you'll see from this issue, we're interested in publishing short reports of research (up to 2,000 words) if they give useful insights into research *methods* / involve reflections on the *process* of research and not just the findings and/or if they are reports of *teacher-research* (research into your own practice).

However, we're also interested in other genres and types of item! Letters, pictures, news items, cartoons (as you'll see!), reflections, stories, reviews, reports – or all of these combined! Anything that provides new insights into, ideas for, or information about ELT research!

You can contact the editors via: resig@iatefl.org. We're also looking for new colleagues for the editorial team –please get in touch if you're interested in helping out!

Categorisation of metaphors for learning

Darren Elliott
(Sugiyama Women's University, Nagoya, Japan)

The following comic book by Darren Elliott was originally presented as a handout for Darren's talk with the same title at the 20th anniversary conference of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Learner Development SIG. Darren used the comic book format as it enabled him to show explicit visual representations of metaphors. Drawing, rather than typing or writing, offered him another way to work through his ideas and figure out exactly what it was he wanted to know. Now he is working up the energy to tackle this research in a more structured way.

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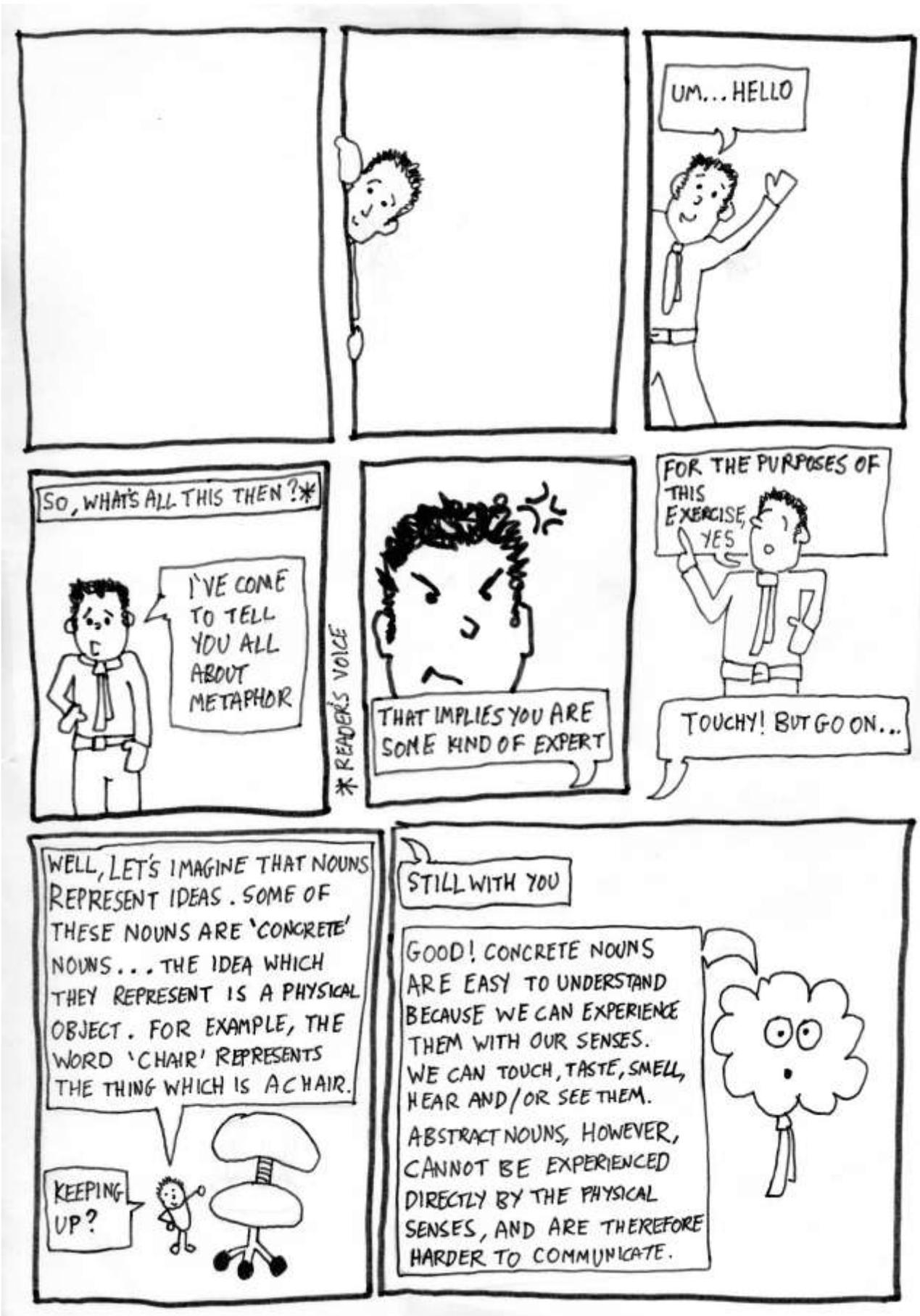
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SO, WE SOMETIMES EXPLAIN THESE ABSTRACTS IN TERMS OF CONCRETES, IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THEM MORE CLEARLY?

HOW ABOUT FORREST GUMP! "LIFE IS LIKE A BOX OF CHOCOLATES, YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO GET"

YOU'RE PRETTY SHARP! OK, GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE



TECHNICALLY, THAT'S A SIMILE, BUT I SUPPOSE IT'LL DO...
THEN WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?



"TIME IS MONEY"... THAT'S A GOOD ONE. WE CAN SPEND IT, SAVE IT, RUN OUT OF IT...



IT SOUNDS AS THOUGH THESE METAPHORS CAN RUN PRETTY DEEP

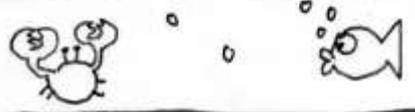
IT SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING WE SHOULD BE DISCUSSING. BY THE WAY, WHY ARE YOU THE ONLY ONE WHO GETS DRAWN?

ABSOLUTELY! IN FACT, LAKOFF AND JOHNSON ARGUE THAT METAPHOR IS ALL-PERVASIVE. IN USING IT TO COMMUNICATE OUR IDEAS, IT SHAPES THOSE IDEAS. SCHON SUGGESTS THE SAME WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT GENERATIVE METAPHOR. THIS IS SOMETHING I WANT TO COME BACK TO...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE, DO I? LET'S GET BACK ON TRACK..



"BACK ON TRACK"... THAT'S A METAPHOR, RIGHT?





MY STUDY, IF WE CAN CALL IT THAT, FOLLOWED A SIMILAR METHODOLOGY

YOU DON'T THINK IT'S A STUDY?



IT WAS A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY THAT THREW UP A FEW INTERESTING RESPONSES

THAT'S WHY YOU ARE READING A COMIC BOOK RATHER THAN AN ARTICLE IN A PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL. FOR NOW, ANYWAY



SO, WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES?

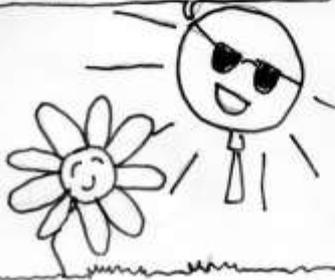
THERE WERE "TEACHER AS CONTROLLER" METAPHORS



(LION TAMER, GENERAL, DOG TRAINER)

"TEACHER AS NURTURER"

(SUN, PARENT, GARDENER)



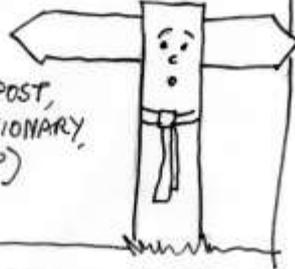
"TEACHER AS LEADER"

(TOUR GUIDE, PILOT, COACH)



"TEACHER AS UTILITY"

(SIGNPOST, DICTIONARY, MAP)



"GOD THE CONTROLLER"



"GOD THE NURTURER"



I ASKED STUDENTS TO GIVE REASONS FOR THEIR CHOICES TOO. A METAPHOR CAN HAVE MANY ASPECTS, SO WE NEED TO KNOW WHICH THEY ARE FOCUSING ON.



WHAT I'M WONDERING IS .. DO THE METAPHORS STUDENTS SELECT CORRESPOND TO THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS AUTONOMY?



I WOULD IMAGINE THAT THOSE WHO SEE THE TEACHER AS A UTILITY WOULD BE PREDISPOSED TOWARDS SELF-DIRECTED STUDY

SO I THINK YOU CAN WRAP THAT UP!



MAYBE NOT... IT CERTAINLY FEELS RIGHT, BUT I STILL HAVE A FEW CONCERNS..

SUCH AS?

ALTHOUGH METAPHORS DO SEEM TO BE CONNECTED TO BELIEFS, THERE ARE OFTEN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHAT PEOPLE THINK AND WHAT THEY DO.

BECAUSE OF SYSTEMIC RESTRAINTS?

AND SOME OF THESE METAPHORS BECOME SO ENTRENCHED THAT THEY LEAVE LITTLE ROOM FOR ANY OTHER METAPHOR

JUST DO IT

SOMETIMES YES. BUT ALSO THROUGH A LACK OF SELF-AWARENESS OR SELF DISCIPLINE

EXAMPLE?

THE DIGITAL NATIVE/DIGITAL IMMIGRANT METAPHOR HAS BEEN VERY ALLURING. EVEN THOUGH IT IS OVERSIMPLISTIC (AND IN SOME WAYS JUST PLAIN WRONG) IT IS SUCH A COMPELLING METAPHOR IT'S BEEN INFLUENCING POLICY DECISIONS.

PASSPORTS PLEASE

HOW ABOUT MIXED METAPHORS?

YES, THERE WERE A NUMBER... AND I THINK THAT'S QUITE HEALTHY. PERHAPS THEY POINT TO A MORE NUANCED VIEW OF EDUCATION.

PLENTY OF RESEARCH PUZZLES TO GET YOUR TEETH INTO THEN!

(NOM NOM) YES, I SHOULD SAY SO

I'D LIKE TO KNOW NOT JUST WHAT METAPHORS TELL US ABOUT BELIEFS, BUT IF THEY CAN TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT PRACTICE



OK

SPECIFICALLY, I'D LIKE TO EXPLORE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN METAPHORS FOR LEARNING AND AUTONOMOUS LEARNING





Practitioner Research

In this regular feature or 'space' in the newsletter we invite teachers, academics and postgraduate students alike to get involved in research into their own practice and to share their experiences, reflections and views on research they have done in their own classrooms. The following piece has been contributed by Wayne Trotman of Izmir Katip Çelebi University, who reflects here on how – and why – he engaged a group of teachers in teacher-research in his institution. Wayne looks forward to the 27-28th June ReSIG-supported conference 'Teacher-Researchers in Action', which was being organized at Gediz University, Izmir, Turkey at the time he wrote this. A report of the conference itself appears later in this issue of ELT Research under 'Conference Reports', and at the end of the present piece Wayne provides his own updated reflections, following the conference.

The road to Gediz

**Wayne Trotman
(Izmir Katip Çelebi University)**

Having been involved in ELT in Turkey for over thirty years, the last twelve of which had been in the higher education EAP arena and during which period I had completed my doctoral studies at the University of Warwick (UK), I yearned to organise a research conference for language teachers in the Aegean region. I was initially put off by the obvious amount of work involved and the likelihood of not being able to find enough speakers. My enthusiasm decreased further when our School of Foreign Languages was moved fifty kilometres outside the city – a barren location to which not many would wish to journey on even a sunny day. In 2012 I left that post, preferring instead a nearer location at a newly-opened state university where – thanks to the PhD – I was appointed as an Assistant Professor responsible for teacher-education.

A year into the new post, and after serendipitously bumping into an ELT colleague at Istanbul airport, I learned there was a conference for language teacher researchers planned at the nearby privately funded Gediz University and organized by Kenan Dikilitaş, then in the process of completing his own doctoral studies. Along with several other colleagues, on the day of the conference we met and I congratulated him on the event, especially when I learned this would be the second ELT research conference he had helped set up and this time inviting attendance from 'outsiders'. I was instantly envious, and at the same time curious to learn how he had done this. Kenan was at that time having problems with completing his thesis and requested a

meeting with me on this. Alarm bells began to ring in my ears. Dealing with one's own thesis is tough enough; helping out with those written by others was something I had warned myself never to do.

After the briefest of chats about cleft sentences – Kenan's doctoral topic - I realised I had missed working on doctoral research matters, and we began to meet on a regular basis over the course of one winter while Kenan completed his data analysis. Our discussions began to be less about his thesis, however, and more about the upcoming third Gediz University research conference, scheduled for the summer of 2013. I began thinking that if Kenan could combine a full time job as trainer at Gediz University with organising a research conference there, then why couldn't I?

I invited myself along to Kenan's office for an afternoon of feedback on participants' intended research presentations, individual tutorials at which IATEFL Research SIG Coordinator Richard Smith was present to provide further feedback. While Kenan and Richard discussed the possibility of combining the fourth Gediz conference with an IATEFL Research SIG conference in Izmir in June 2014, an idea formed in my mind that teachers from my own institution might like to present work there. 'Anything Kenan could do, so could I' was my motto.

Back at work – at Izmir Katip Çelebi University – I put out initial feelers, inviting colleagues to a brief meeting to mull over the possibilities and degrees of interest in setting up and carrying out their own research projects. Nine colleagues attended the first meeting at which I outlined how full support for research would be available from at least me. Motivation soared when I explained at the second meeting that there was a possibility of presenting at the by then confirmed Gediz / IATEFL Research SIG conference in June 2014. Meetings over the summer of 2013 continued at which proposals were refined; they were later attended by Kenan, who provided valuable input concerning researching EAP in the higher education sector in Turkey. Currently proposals range from the benefits to teachers of peer-observation to raising students' intercultural awareness by using poetry in the classroom.

So you see, a little bit of luck – or, rather, an event or forum like the Gediz conference stimulating interest and initial impetus – is all it takes to create an in-house research community. The current nine colleagues involved in working towards presenting at the conference now see themselves as not only language teachers. As one commented only recently, "I feel like my workplace sees the value in my investigating my classroom instead of just providing me with a weekly schedule and telling me to get on with that". Time will tell whether the nine are accepted as speakers, but I'm optimistic, and in research that's the way to be.

Update:

I wrote the above piece in late 2013, by which time research studies were well underway. As I type this, in late August 2014, I'm in the process of organising our very own first ELT Research conference at Izmir Katip Çelebi University; but more on that later. Of the 'nine colleagues' referred to earlier, six researchers saw things through to the end; two pulled out early on, quite rightly prioritising their doctoral studies, while another failed to get over the final hurdle, realising that research can at times be a tough gig.

Each of the six presented their studies at the ReSIG-supported conference here in Izmir in May 2014, attended by over a hundred participants from across Turkey and beyond. Some were thrilled to have invited plenary speakers Anne Burns or Dick Allwright sitting in on their sessions. That the six were able to get this far was down to their efforts over the winter and into the spring, often with busy teaching and admin loads, not to mention their own youngsters. During this time, apart from scheduled individual weekly tutorials with me concerning the ethics of data generation and analysis, Kenan Dikilitaş kindly gave up several afternoons to enable our "super six" to get a very much appreciated second opinion on their work. All it cost from the 'Research Budget' (aka 'my own pocket') was the price of tea and digestive biscuits.

As a group, we were also lucky to be invited to the nearby Gediz University to listen in on Kenan's own tutorials with potential first and second-time presenters. I guess the key words thus far are 'mutual respect', 'communication' and 'co-operation'. Kenan and I have come a long way since we met two years ago. The initial politeness has hardened to hurling research related barbed comments at each other, but we're still talking, still planning future conferences. Having a sense of humour is vital when you're constantly delving into often murky data.

Success breeds success: all six were recently sent news that articles they'd written up on their studies have been accepted for publication in a forthcoming ReSIG Teacher Research book¹. Before that comes out, they will all be speaking at our own first local conference, which is scheduled for September 24th 2014. Meanwhile, research never sleeps, and I'm already in their ears over their next research study, with some wishing not only to carry out their own, but also mentor other first timers. As Simon Borg said to his audience when presenting in Izmir recently, "Teacher development is contagious". Try it, and you'll see.

¹ [Ed. Note] Papers from the Gediz conference are being edited to appear in a forthcoming ReSIG book.

At IATEFL 2014 in April Katie Moran talked about her first experiences with exploratory/action research both at our 'Teachers Research!' PCE (see report later in this issue) and during the SIG Day. Here is her report.

Exploratory/action research to improve oral presentations with French university students: Two cycles¹

Katie Moran
(Efrei, Paris, France)

This article summarises an ongoing project, conducted by a newcomer to exploratory/action research, which aims to help French university students improve their mandatory in-class oral presentations. I will outline the two completed cycles of the research and present motivations for a third cycle.

1. The first cycle

Background

From 2000-2010, I believed that my students benefited greatly from preparing and giving talks. Their motivation and effort were reflected in the high quality of their presentations and how attentively they listened to peers' talks.

In recent years, however, I felt that the quality of the presentations had dropped. Many students seemed to be preparing their talks quickly and at the last minute, without seeing the linguistic or professional value of the exercise. It appeared that they were sourcing the contents online and simply reading their findings without engaging in in-depth reflection or analysis. Few students seemed to be listening actively to their peers' talks and I felt that students were not taking my feedback into account.

In February 2013, I had the opportunity to attend an inspiring workshop entitled Action Research for Professional Development organised in Paris by UPLEGESS (*Union des Professeurs de Langues des*

¹ A shorter report on this project is due to appear in Pattison, T. (ed.). (In press). *IATEFL 2014 Harrogate Conference Selections*. Faversham: IATEFL.

Grandes Ecoles) and facilitated by Divya Brochier and Dr Richard Smith.

Subsequent dialogue with Richard helped me to realize that I had some doubts about my own perceptions (as indicated in my second paragraph above: “students seemed”, “It appeared...”, “I felt...”, etc.) and helped me to see that I might be able to gain a better understanding of the situation through exploratory/action research.

I was interested in the students’ perspectives concerning:

- the reality of their experience
- when/how they prepared their presentations
- the quality of their talks
- their peers’ presentations
- the feedback they received
- the value of the activity

Procedure

In order to log my experience and facilitate reflection, I made brief notes throughout the project.

I started by explaining to my class that I was always trying to improve myself as a teacher and that I wanted to see if the quality of the oral presentations could be improved. I asked them if they wanted to collaborate by participating in a small research project – they immediately replied positively.

After sharing my generally negative perceptions of their previous talks, I explained that in order to improve the activity effectively, I needed to know their opinions. I wrote words on the board to remind the students of the elements involved in oral presentations (subject, instructions, preparation, sources etc.) and the question “In my opinion, how valuable is the oral presentation activity?” I gave the students forty-five minutes of class time to write freely about presentations, explaining that they could use the question as a starting point if they wished and underlining the fact that they really were free to write anything they liked regarding the presentations – positive or negative. I explained that the freewrite was anonymous and could be done in French. There was a relaxed, studious atmosphere in the classroom and the students really took the opportunity to collect their thoughts and express their opinions.

After class, I analysed the freewrites systematically by looking for themes that reoccurred and then translated the findings into English. Using an overhead projector, I disseminated the analysis orally the following class. The students were a captivated audience and seemed very interested in their peers’ viewpoints and how their own comments had been portrayed in English.

Given the richness of the data and the enthusiasm generated, I asked the class if they wanted to come up

with a plan of action to ensure top quality talks that semester. The students were genuinely enthusiastic about the idea.

I put the students in groups of three to brainstorm, telling them that they could draw inspiration from the freewrite analysis or any experiences of talks they had given or seen. The discussions were collaborative, dynamic and productive.

Next, I led a class discussion during which I asked each group to express what they thought needed to be done differently. As a group, we then came up with numerous improvement strategies. Although I led the discussion and made notes on the board, I made a conscious effort not to interrupt the students when they put forward ideas or when they were engaging in spontaneous debating. As much as possible, I tried to let the strategies emerge from the students themselves.

We then scheduled our class plan of action, allowing time for the oral presentations, and a final freewrite.

Improvement strategies

In total, the class democratically decided upon eight improvement strategies, each with a clear objective and a pedagogical justification. Three examples include:

Freer subject

The class considered that the more autonomy a student has in choosing a presentation topic, the more captivating and enriching the oral presentation experience is. As the course was on cross-cultural awareness, the class decided that they would be able to research and present *any* angle of “culture” – they wanted the freedom to use their creativity.

Evaluation criteria

The students said it would be useful for them to have a clearer idea of the evaluation criteria. I explained that I exploit an evaluation grid and suggested that – as a class – we could develop one together. I set up a group poster-creating activity by sticking up four large sheets of paper around the classroom; each poster had a different heading: contents, structure, delivery and language. In small groups, students brainstormed and wrote notes on the poster of the criteria that *they* would want to take into account if *they* were the teacher evaluating the talks. After this, the groups switched posters, read and discussed the criteria that their peers had come up with and added other ideas. After switching posters a final time, I centralised the ideas on the board. After much discussion, we collegially decided how many points would be attributed to each section.

Audience interest

The students found it disconcerting when their peers did not listen to their presentations. We agreed that the students should participate in the evaluation process by using a simplified version of our class evaluation grid, which would include space for a question to be written.

We then put the new plan of action into practice. After all the presentations had been conducted, students were again asked to engage in a freewrite.

Freewrite analysis

Four main points emerged from my analysis of the rich data represented by the final rewrite: the perception of higher quality presentations as a result of the project; overwhelming endorsement of the exploratory, participatory and democratic nature of the class project; the positive impact on the teacher/learner relationships; and, finally, the belief that the project – because of its limitations but also because of its potential - should be continued.

The following six quotes particularly struck me:

- 1) "I found the first freewrite interesting to write but most of all to read. [...] The fact that you showed us back what we wrote was very funny: we could see what each of us said and the points a lot of us did mention. It permitted us to see the lesson in a different point of view, not like a student but more like an analyst."
- 2) "First I was surprised the first time you asked us to do some free writing to understand what was wrong with the fall of the quality of presentations and the bad grades. I think I'm not the only one to think that it's the first time that a teacher wants to engage in a sincere discussion with us to talk about our problems and what we need and want the course to be. Many teachers say 'I don't know what's wrong with you but there is a problem, I have never seen that before', then they continue their course the same way and they don't really care about what's wrong."
- 3) "In sum, despite my initial scepticism regarding the project (I didn't think that anything original would come out of it), I was surprised by how seriously the project was undertaken. I noticed that I was more implicated in my presentation and that the atmosphere of the class became more intellectual and fun."
- 4) "The freewrite about the presentations makes us realise that we believe doing presentations is important."
- 5) "I think you should continue to do that and some teachers should learn about what you did to do that in other classes too. The idea of setting a goal together and talking about it, talking about the rules, this was great for you I think and for us for sure."
- 6) "Maybe it won't work every year with every class, but for us this class project has been very beneficial and interesting. In my opinion, the biggest obstacle

in the future will be to motivate the students to participate seriously."

Reflections followed by action

Throughout my teaching career, I like to think that I have constantly tried to improve my teaching skills and to broaden my mind through reading, attending conferences and exchanging ideas and experiences with colleagues.

This is the first time however that I have *really* taken the time to try and understand a teaching/learning situation from the students' standpoint. This project has enabled me to genuinely explore and understand students' expectations, while teaching *with* rather than *at* my students has rekindled my belief that my students are interested in and capable of improving.

The students appreciated this truly learner-centred approach and seemed to flourish from being treated as active partners. It was heart-warming to witness their change in attitude and motivation for their talks, as they took ownership of the project and experienced learner awareness.

I was reminded that my students come to the classroom as highly creative individuals with different experiences and expectations. The goal-oriented cooperation experienced in this project proved highly stimulating, empowering and productive for us all. I also believe the project increased mutual respect and higher quality presentations, particularly in terms of structure and delivery.

I did nevertheless feel that many talks continued to lack in-depth content and analysis. Another frustration included the feeling that the project had been ill-timed (the project started too late and thus coincided with the exam period).

More abstractly, I also questioned whether the success of the project had been down to beginner's luck or to the particular dynamics of that class, individual students, etc. Would the ideas that emerged from this project resonate with and motivate other students? Could additional innovative ideas be conceived?

I thus decided to do the project again with different students, following the same procedure of freewrites and a class action plan.

2. The second cycle: key findings and reflections

I have come to really appreciate the cyclical nature of exploratory/action research. I observed how the students seemed to appreciate and adhere to the idea of participating in an ongoing, organic project.

In the second cycle, the class was very interested in finding out the strategies last semester's group had

come up with. They were receptive to their peers' ideas but remained analytical. They borrowed strategies from the previous project that had particularly resonated with them (such as a freer subject choice and having a say in the evaluation criteria/breakdown). Interestingly, the reasons why they reemployed a particular strategy were not necessarily the same. For example, in the first cycle, peer evaluation was undertaken with the objective of inciting active listening, whereas in the second round the students wanted to have the possibility of influencing the grade.

To encourage original, reflective and protracted thinking, the second-cycle students came up with new strategies. These included requiring peers to present a two-minute pitch of their idea/plan two weeks before the presentation date. The pitch was to be approved by the class and advice and ideas for further research were also to be given.

In my opinion, the strategies which emerged from the freewrite and group/class discussions this time around really complemented those thought up by the previous group.

In the first cycle, evidence of in-depth analysis was scarce in many talks. In retrospect, the strategies selected were more focused on helping students grasp presentation-giving skills as opposed to encouraging the students to engage in critical thinking. For example, first-cycle strategies included a student talk on how to give an effective oral presentation and the class evaluation grid poster activity resulted in only twenty-five percent of the presentation grade being attributed to content.

In the second cycle, the strategies generally aimed at ensuring that the content of each talk was rich and original. For example, the class agreed that content should account for fifty percent of the grade and pitches were designed to safeguard against superficial topics and analysis.

In this research project, the cyclical, upward spiral nature of the approach has greatly improved the quality of the presentations. Good practice, which had emerged from a project involving the students themselves, was communicated to a different group of students who selected and adapted the strategies as they saw fit. The second group had no problems taking the project further by creating additional strategies to overcome the limits of the previous project as well as the specific wants and needs of the group itself, wants and needs that had, again, been identified by the students themselves.

The findings of the final freewrite analysis echoed those of the first cycle, although one notable addition was the extremely positive reaction the students had to the typed feedback I had given/emailed each group. For example, one participant wrote:

“After a presentation, feedbacks help a lot, mostly because it came right after it. I really liked the feedback from the teacher and also from other students. Having feedback for the students is interesting because they are the most difficult people in the class to keep focus. It's rare to have written feedback and it made the presentation more important than just a grade and can improve our future presentations.”

Such insight into the value students attribute to technical and linguistic feedback from their teacher and peers is valuable and thought-provoking. This led me to a further question -- How could this aspect of oral presentations be improved?

Final reflections

In terms of professional development, since beginning this project in February 2013 I have noticed that I have become a more reflective, engaged and receptive teacher both inside and outside of the classroom. It has been very stimulating and refreshing to discover developments in the English-teaching world whether through literature or at conferences as an active action researcher. I have found myself looking for connections – at a conscious and unconscious level – and more open to new ideas. After learning about a new approach, activity or piece of equipment, I am now eager to share the knowledge with my learners and find out what they think too. If the class does decide to experiment with new or different ideas, techniques or methods, I am confident that they too are behind the project. I wonder if it is the “synergy” of the teacher and students cooperating towards a common goal which underpins the success of the approach.

More action?

Could the oral presentation activity be improved further by a third cycle of this project? I would certainly be interested in exploring the role of the teacher as a project facilitator and language expert and I have many ideas that I would like to share with my students. I am also tempted to try and pursue the project by collaborating with colleagues. In any case, I have become an action research addict – relishing the opportunity to develop professionally in the context of a very busy teacher's life.

Roundtable Discussion Report

This is the second half of a report of a roundtable discussion on 'The state of ELT research in the UK' held at the September 2011 British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) annual conference, University of West of England, Bristol. Following inputs from Richard Smith and John Knagg (reported in Part I of this report: Smith & Knagg, 2012), there were further invited inputs from UK-based researchers Olwyn Alexander, Richard Kiely, Catherine Walter, Cyril Weir, James Simpson and Adrian Holliday before the discussion was opened to the floor. The discussion was organized by Richard Smith and chaired by Phillida Schellekens. Although some time has elapsed since the discussion reported here, and a further supplement to the Directory (for 2011-12) has been issued (Smith with Choi, Liggins & Sky, 2014), we are publishing this report now because the issues still seem 'live' and, also, relevant to other contexts where similar surveys of ELT research are currently being undertaken (e.g. India).

The state of ELT research in the UK (Part II)

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Introduction

As a consequence of a British Council data-gathering exercise we were both involved in – for the Directory of UK ELT Research 2005-2010 (for more information, see: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/elt-research) – quite comprehensive information about ELT research publications, doctoral work and funded projects at British institutions became available for the first time. One aim of the project had always been not only to describe the current situation, but also to encourage evaluative discussion of the nature and state of ELT research in the UK. Accordingly, during the roundtable discussion we report on here participants were invited to reflect on a set of questions arising from the project, relating to the following overall concerns:

- Issues of scope / definition of 'ELT research'
- The nature of UK ELT research
- Evaluation of the 'current state' of UK ELT research
- Improvement of the current situation

(for the full list of questions, as shared with participants,

see the Appendix to this report)

As will be seen below, some, but not all, of the above areas of concern were considered during the discussion while additional issues were brought into play. A particular overall emphasis seemed to emerge on the 'impact' of ELT research, with 'impact' being both the theme of the BAAL 2011 conference and an issue of continuing contemporary importance for researchers in British Higher Education, as well as for organisations like the British Council.

Panellists' opinions

The first short input came from **Olwyn Alexander** (Heriot-Watt University). As Chair of BALEAP ('A global forum for EAP professionals': www.baleap.org.uk) at the time of the discussion, she had recently asked representatives of all member institutions to complete an online survey, gaining an approximately 54% response rate. Results of her survey showed that about half of the practitioners who replied were not actually based in academic departments, but in other units, such as support services, which are by no means research-oriented. Combined with the respondents' frequent heavy teaching workloads, this has a big negative impact on the amount of research conducted by EAP practitioners. In fact, few respondents had the possibility of taking days off for research activities, and most answered that they were carrying out (only) 'some' or 'no' research (at all). However, when asked specifically whether action research or exploratory practice were being undertaken, over 65% of the participants responded that they conducted 'some', with about 20% responding 'none'. Considering that involvement in quality assurance (QA) could be regarded as a form of research, Olwyn found that a high number of respondents claimed to be involved in this (about 60% within their own institution, about 80% outside it). Overall, Olwyn lamented the fact that EAP professionals were so little engaged in research bearing in mind that they increasingly need to teach postgraduate students.

Richard Kiely (University College Plymouth St Mark & St John at the time of the discussion, but now University of Southampton) was the next speaker. Devoting extensive thought to whether ELT research should be considered a 'distinct field of enquiry', he suggested that the area is not exactly distinct, but is definitely very important. In his view, perceptions have shifted away from prescriptive notions of ELT, there having been 'an inevitable failure' in past top-down approaches which viewed classrooms only as sites of language learning. ELT should be seen not as something that comes out of research but rather as a set of practices, as the raw material for investigation and theorisation. There is currently a great deal of research being carried out by researchers who are or who have been teachers, with a focus on describing, interpreting and making sense of ELT via interpretive and local explanatory work. What is needed now, though, is, firstly, for all this work to be

drawn together, so that the significant messages become more visible. There is then a need for another stage in research which returns to theory development, but this time not with theory coming from a fixed set of ideas such as SLA, for example, but from interdisciplinary perspectives, so that ELT is to be understood as a complex set of practices. Thus, while we are beginning to understand how and why ELT is carried out, with local, social and historical explanatory factors, there is still a gap in terms of theories to explain these practices.

In her input, **Catherine Walter** (University of Oxford) addressed the same issue as Richard Kiely, but from a different perspective. Her main point was that it makes little sense to isolate research on ELT and English language learning from instruction in other languages. On the one hand, she acknowledged that ELT is atypical and specific due to the status of English as a world language (e.g. motivation and attitudes towards learning and teaching English vs. other languages may differ) and the way it is structured (e.g. some ELT research may not be very applicable to research on the teaching of other languages), which warrants the need for research that explores those areas. On the other hand, she felt that the Directories ran the risk of missing valuable insights derived from work on languages other than English, since their scope was limited solely to ELT. She also emphasised that using the term 'ELT research' brings a danger of homogenization, obscuring, for example, the distinction between research into English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL). Despite implications often emanating from the USA that the results of intervention studies in ESL environments can be applied to EFL, she highlighted the dangers of overgeneralisation in this area, even if the entries in the current Directory indicate that this is much less the case in the UK. Instead, a more meaningful division could be between learning a language in a country where it is spoken, as opposed to foreign language learning. At the same time, Catherine thought it was encouraging to see in the Directories that UK research is carried out in a wide range of countries.

Cyril Weir (University of Bedfordshire) considered issues of practical outcomes of ELT research, its nature and impact. Eliciting his colleagues' viewpoints, he had found there was a general consensus that ELT research should have practical outcomes, and that a gap needed to be bridged between academia and the world of the ELT practitioner. Indeed, the gap is so wide and there are seemingly so few people moving these days from ELT practice into academia, that the question needs to be asked 'Who is actually competent to do ELT research?'. Those on a Higher Education pathway from a first degree to MA and PhD with very little actual English language teaching experience, in CRELLA's collective view, need to be provided with more training and more classroom practice. Other suggestions included the British Council setting aside specific

funding for current ELT teachers to be more research-active and for practitioner research. If the theory-practice divide continues, Cyril expressed his worry about the threat to our sector that the current UK higher education research assessment exercise and future ones will pose. He proposed that there is a need for more articles and books that build bridges from research findings to practice. As the recognition of impact in the forthcoming (UK Higher Education) Research Excellence Framework clearly points to the importance of practical outcomes for theoretical research, there is a need for more cross-departmental initiatives between research units and learning contexts, involving not just university language centres, but also nearby language schools or state schools. Cyril referred to the impact of ELT research as a highly important concern which will determine the future of our sector. It can be divided into 3 levels: civic (impact on the knowledge and skills available in society), economic (impact in terms of the value of work) and impact on research-informed practice (the effect on individuals).

James Simpson (University of Leeds) talked about research in ESOL (the teaching of English to refugees and immigrants in the UK) and its impact on policy and practice, with reference not only to the huge number of people in need of ESOL classes (e.g. about 600,000 people in London alone), but also to the way research needs to be interdisciplinary. Underlining the challenges that ESOL students as migrants face on a daily basis (such as, unfair social and educational policies restricting students' access to the type of language education they need to function fully in society), he stated that ESOL research could do much more in terms of impact to bring those issues to light, counter some of the occurring imbalances and promote students' access to appropriate learning opportunities, which, while at odds with an institutional understanding of impact, aligns with the overall purpose of Applied Linguistics (to act in areas where language is a central issue). While ESOL teachers have always adopted a critical stance towards practice and policies/discourses impinging on that practice, ESOL researchers should work in unison with language teachers to support such an approach. Considering that these are very difficult times for ESOL (teacher job cuts, no funding, campaigns to save the sector etc.), he advocated that there is no better time than now to engage in critical research with an eye on social justice, to critique current policy, and to inform and influence legislators. James' final remark was that with ESOL being so closely tied up with arguments about migration, asylum, citizenship, social exclusion, economy and globalisation, it should be natural for ESOL research to address both policy and practice, and ESOL practitioners should be encouraged to become both users and producers of research.

Finally, **Adrian Holliday** (Canterbury Christ Church University) talked about the type of ELT research conducted in his largely teaching-oriented department,

which focuses on impact, teacher development and what they call, 'sociology of ELT as a profession' – qualitative investigation of the nature of the profession in terms of its discourse, e.g. globalisation, student identity, politics of prejudice, professional discourses etc., none of which is based on Applied Linguistics. Drawing attention to the difficulty of getting published because there do not seem to be many journals interested in this sort of research, he argued that there needs to be a stronger emphasis on looking at the ELT profession as an educational enterprise from a sociological perspective. As an example, he referred to a recent discussion on the BAAL email discussion list about native/non-native speaker teacher issues, underlining the relevance of the type of research that both students and staff are engaged in in his department. He stressed that research on issues related to professional prejudice can be aligned with mainstream critical qualitative research, itself based on well-established traditions of educational research going back to the 1960s and 1970s.

General discussion

For the final half hour, discussion was opened to the floor. Overall, as the chair, Phillida Schellekens pointed out at the end, three main areas were addressed by audience members:

- 1) How relevant is UK ELT research to the ELT world?
- 2) How is quality to be measured?
- 3) What new directions should be taken?

Firstly, with regard to relevance, a lack of UK ELT research related to secondary schooling was highlighted, and it was noted that much research is carried out within or oriented towards higher education. John Knagg (British Council) pointed out that a lot of research, for example into English language, is applicable across levels while agreeing that there is a need for more research that is directed towards secondary and primary levels. Richard Kiely suggested two reasons for the preponderance of research into tertiary contexts apparent from the Directories of UK ELT research: firstly, the ready availability of research participants and, secondly, the way researchers are wishing to engage with problems in their full complexity, which seems to necessitate familiarity with the context under investigation. Funding bodies can and probably should direct research towards secondary and primary school contexts by stating priorities in this area. Finally, Catherine Walter pointed out some of the difficulties of researching school age children, including problems of access and the fact that research tools often need to be specially developed for use with children.

Taking up the issue of relevance from a different angle, some contributors from the floor highlighted the value of practitioner research and pointed to some of the possibilities as well as constraints of teachers being positioned not just as consumers but as producers of

relevant knowledge. Olwyn Alexander responded by drawing attention to a budding system under discussion within BALEAP whereby an applied linguist will team up with a practising teacher and shared research can be carried out. The researcher needs to see the teacher as an equal, and it is unclear how this might work out in practice. She also highlighted the research training events for EAP practitioners which BALEAP has organized and the way IATEFL Research SIG had joined in with publicity for these. There are ongoing attempts to engage members in action research or exploratory practice but there also difficulties.

Moving on from this, there were also suggestions that practitioners could have more of an input into the kind of research that goes on, and that academics should set foot in language classrooms to a greater extent than seemed to be generally the case. While a lack of time on both academic and practitioner sides was acknowledged as one barrier, ideological differences, including those in conceptions of what research 'is', were also highlighted as a barrier by one audience participant, Parvaneh Tavakoli (University of Reading), on the basis of her own research.

Attention then turned to whether UK ELT research is distinctive in any way, with Rosamond Mitchell (University of Southampton) pointing out how much relevant research is going on around the world and that there are centres of excellence everywhere. John Knagg responded by saying that the attempt to survey research on a national basis seemed to be unique to the UK and that there was no equivalent survey in the USA, for example, although there was interest in the Directory project when he had given a presentation about it at the 2011 TESOL Convention in New Orleans. There was a general perception in the world that the UK has many centres of excellence in the area of ELT research, particularly as a result of the development of the applied linguistics movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The UK is also perceived internationally as a place where teacher education and academic research come together in a fruitful way.

In response to this, a suggestion was made from the floor that the UK needed to contribute to the development of centres of excellence in other parts of the world, for example in Africa. Richard Kiely argued that labelling a place as a centre of 'excellence' or 'expertise' is an evaluative act and that, as he filled in his own entries for submission to the Directory project, he had not been thinking in terms of claim to expertise, but simply in terms of recording or reporting. He felt that the value of the Directory lay in the way it drew together what had been done, providing it with greater visibility, and that this in itself could be of value for other contexts. For example, there is enormous difficulty in accessing research in Africa, and the Directory database can perform a great service to people there. It is also of value in teacher education, but is not valuable as a

statement of excellence. From the floor, Lynda Taylor (University of Bedfordshire) pointed out that although all the research in the Directory had been done by at least one person affiliated with a UK institution, very often the studies are localized, with situated practices being analysed. This is most obviously the case in PhD theses, but also in funded projects. Thus, the designation 'UK' ELT research can be misunderstood and we would be wrong to interpret what is in there as necessarily being connected with a UK research site.

Other points discussed included Cyril Weir's recommendation that to bridge the research-practice divide, position papers could be put on websites as freely available resources, which could enable hit identification/ web traffic measurement, and end-users would get used to the idea of research-related resources being accessible. There was also a suggestion from the floor (Steve Walsh, University of Newcastle) that there is a problem with MA students not carrying on with research after returning to their home countries, to which Richard Smith responded by describing how MA students could be encouraged to join associations like IATEFL, and its Research SIG, to keep in touch with research issues as well as to disseminate their own research insights. Gibson Ferguson (University of Sheffield) made the point that impact can also be negative, with premature application or 'rushing into impact' potentially having damaging effects. Catherine Walter concurred with this, citing the way research in tertiary contexts can be inappropriately extended down to children. Finally, Jenny Pugsley (Trinity College London, now retired) asked whether the academic community has an influence on defining the frames of reference for measuring quality of research, or whether there is a one-size-fits-all approach across disciplines. Replying to this, Richard Kiely expressed his concern that we are working with a narrative of research informing practice, whereas in reality ELT practice informs research and practitioners are the ones who are knowledge constructors. So, with regard to impact, the REF exercise is important but narrow from a long-term perspective. The wider frame of impact is that of educational ideas, and we need to place value on the way we constitute a community which is developing educational ideas with a good effect on quality of life but whose impact cannot be easily measured. This was disagreed with by Cyril Weir, who reemphasized the need, from his point of view, for research to have a measurable beneficial impact on society – an impact which he did not see occurring much at present.

Further discussion

If any readers of this report wish to express their own views on the issues raised (and/or respond to any of the full set of questions distributed to participants in the session and reproduced below, in the Appendix), they can do so on the Directory project's blog: <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/uk-elt-research->

[directory](#) (where there are already suggestions from, among others, Scott Thornbury).

References

- Rixon, S. & Smith, R. (2010). *Directory of UK ELT Research 2005-08*. London: The British Council. Online: <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/elt-research>
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Appendix

Full list of questions for reflection / discussion shared with panellists and audience

a. *Issues of scope / definition*

To what extent is it useful/feasible to conceive of 'ELT research' as a distinct field of inquiry? Indeed, what exactly is ELT research? Is the restriction of this [in the Directory project] to research which 'relates directly' to the teaching, learning or assessment of English as a Foreign, Second or Additional Language' too narrow? Who does ELT research? How do some people earn the right to consider themselves ELT researchers rather than simply applied linguists or teachers with classroom ideas to share?

b. *The nature of UK ELT research*

What does the British Council's Directory of UK ELT Research (2005-2010) tell us about the kinds of research being undertaken in the UK? Do particular kinds of research predominate at the expense of others? How does UK ELT research compare to that undertaken elsewhere? Is UK ELT research distinctive from other countries' ELT research? If it is, in what ways? If not, then what does this signify?

c. *Evaluation*

How should we conceive of impact and 'quality' in ELT research? Bearing in mind the probability that assessments of the worth of UK academic departments' research in the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework ('REF') [a nationwide assessment of university departments' research quality, 2008-13] will include up to 20% for 'impact', how do the contents entered in the Directory of UK ELT Research for 2005-2010 seem to measure up in this area? How should 'quality' otherwise be measured in ELT research? What is the actual quality as well as relevance and impact of UK ELT research? Is UK ELT research in a healthy state (or in 'existential crisis')?

d. *Improvement*

On the basis of the above, what can be done to improve UK ELT research? What ELT research 'should' be carried out which is not represented in the Directory? Does the British Council have a role to play (as in the past) in relation to UK ELT research? If so, should its role be simply to publicise research that is already going on, to 'tap into' such research in some way, and/or to stimulate and originate?

Conference Reports

If you attend a conference that you think could be usefully reviewed for other Research SIG members, please consider submitting a report (of up to around 1,000 words). We encourage you to reflect on what you personally gained from the conference as well as reporting on what speakers said. In this issue we have four reports – all of events either supported by or organized by the IATEFL Research SIG.

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‘Classroom-oriented research: Reconciling theory and practice’, 14 – 16 October 2013, Konin, Poland

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Much of my research has been undertaken in my own classrooms, hence my strong interest in attending this event. The conference boasted an impressive line-up of illustrious international researchers as plenary speakers – Professors Jean-Marc Dewaele, Anne Burns, David Singleton, Elaine Horwitz and Paul Meara being among these – whose presentations would likely address and shed greater light on the dynamic between theory and practice, and the toing and froing between these – the praxis – which constitutes the work and practices of many of us involved in classroom research.

Indeed, conferences are not only crucial events for becoming more familiar with research, but also provide fertile ground for us to participate in and join the research community, in essence to become a researcher.

As a member of the IATEFL Research SIG committee, I was kindly given a few minutes at the opening ceremony to publicise the activities of the SIG’s activities. The opening address, which took place in the impressive auditorium of the new Conference Center of the State School of Higher Professional Education (PWSZ) in Konin, gave way to a tribute to Professor David Singleton, who was presented by Professor Miroslaw Pawlak, the chair of the conference organising

committee, with a published volume¹ in honour of his contribution to the field of SLA. This set the tone for this excellent conference in which collegiality and participation were evident in both the plenaries and sessions I attended, as well as in the generous and first-rate social programme. It was also truly encouraging to see established researchers engaging with and supporting the less experienced presenters.

This report is a personal narrative related to my participation in this conference and reflects my own interests as a teacher-researcher, particularly, in affective factors in teaching and learning. However, I hope the issues discussed here will also be deemed relevant to others working in our field. This reference to narrative relates to the notion of *researcher stories* - something that I have been interested in for some time now, and it is one of my contentions that researchers’ presentations and talks, whilst largely focusing on their research projects, may also reveal key aspects of how they do research and what it means to be(come) a researcher.

Therefore, I focus on three presentations, which in my opinion not only reveal how affective issues are often crucial in our teaching, but also how, in general, research problems, puzzles and questions may often arise out of the everyday events and routines of classroom practice. In this sense, doing research is not out of the reach of many teachers and early career researchers, but is, in fact, accessible and doable. Further, this indicates that the impulse to do research may often precede and inform theory. As such, it dovetails with the central theme of this conference.

With reference to ‘researcher stories’, I hope to stimulate debate and reflection on the factors that influence the co-construction of our researcher identity(ies). The use of ‘Learner stories’ has become well-established in the SLA literature, involving an approach - usually qualitative - that attempts to identify key aspects or critical moments in learners’ language learning histories to better understand the language learning process. However, the notion of ‘researcher stories’ is still underexplored (though see Norton & Early, 2011). At the same time, many researchers, whether experienced or inexperienced, possess stories worth sharing that demonstrate the particularities of their own research projects, how these projects may have emerged out of seemingly casual or insignificant moments, and how their research is closely tied up with their own personal interests. These factors are likely to encourage more researchers to reflect on their own research practices.

As previously mentioned, my research interests centre on affective factors, especially language anxiety, so I eagerly awaited the plenaries of Jean-Marc Dewaele

¹ Miroslaw Pawlak and Larissa Aronin (2013) *Essential Topics in Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism: Studies in Honor of David Singleton*.

and Elaine Horwitz, two researchers well-known for their interest in affective factors². Further, I hoped to be able to exchange and discuss ideas, to have the opportunity of learning from prominent researchers in the field, and to become more familiar with their own trajectories as researchers.

The three researchers I will talk about in this article – Professors Dewaele and Horwitz, and Sarat Kumar Doley – all weaved ‘stories’ from their own experience into their presentations.

1) Firstly, and with great humour, Professor Dewaele referred to cultural differences regarding communication. For example, shaking hands is something he does on a regular basis, a cultural practice that may seem inappropriate for many UK citizens. He also spoke about one of his classes in which two students sitting at the front of the class appeared to have a somewhat threatening manner, staring and unsmiling, intense and still. At the end of the class, the two students waited for the other students to leave the room and then approached Professor Dewaele. Feeling somewhat threatened by their demeanour, he waited for them to talk. And they did. They thanked him for the enjoyable lecture he had just given! These anecdotes were used to illustrate that emotions are simply not expressed in the same way across cultures.

Professor Dewaele then went on to talk about the increase of interest in affect and emotions, their importance in FL classes, and the myriad and complex ways in which emotions can impact our teaching. In fact, our interpretations of others’ emotions may well be at odds with how they actually feel and such discrepancies - as in the cases cited above - may be due to cultural norms. Further, while emotions may be ever-present in our lives, they are often suppressed and avoided, which may be one of the reasons why emotions are so conspicuously ‘absent’ in FL teaching although they are a crucial influence on cognition and behaviour.

Professor Dewaele not only referred to the micro-affective factors in the classroom, but also the macro-affective factors that may exert an influence on learners and teachers’ attitudes to the TL. These can include the historical and political context in which the language is being learned. For example, learning Russian in Poland or French in Flanders is likely to carry significant baggage for many learners in those contexts. Interestingly, he referred to a published longitudinal study (Garrett and Young, 2009) and one of the author’s attempts to learn Portuguese in Brazil, an experience from which they trace the implications of the impact of emotion on the experience of learning a foreign

language. In this case, the researchers were researching themselves, and applying their experience and knowledge to theories of affect. However, many researchers may try to distance themselves from their own research, and to align themselves with a more scientific kind of writing which avoids the use of ‘I’ and adheres to the use of impersonal and more ‘objective’ language. This is what I did, for example, in the early stages of my own research on language anxiety. However, I have since gradually abandoned this stance in order to embrace what Pavlenko (2005) refers to as combining the scholarly and the personal. In my view, such a stance not only encourages people to read and identify more with research, but it also has the potential to bridge the gaps between researchers and those who participate in their projects, with these often being teachers.

Given limits of space, I cannot do justice here to the range of ideas that Professor Dewaele spoke about in his engaging, humorous and thought-provoking plenary, but the following notions were among those offered up: that language is much more than a functional tool, that researchers may also want to focus more on positive emotions as opposed to the negative ones, and that teachers could use their own emotions as a way of improving the language learning experience for all involved.

2) Professor Elaine Horwitz, in turn, one of the most cited scholars in the language anxiety literature, spoke about how her own research trajectory shifted from a more theoretical concern with different levels of learner complexity to research that was ‘forced’ upon her by the learners themselves. Here, she spoke about how learners’ concerns gradually led her to focus on the topic of language anxiety, which in turn led her to question to what extent research should be theoretical and to what extent - applied.

Moreover, Professor Horwitz was of the opinion that learners’ voices are not represented sufficiently in classroom research, which resonated with my own experience. As a researcher, I have moved away from using self-reports investigating anxiety to focus on what learners themselves have to say about their emotional experiences in the classroom. This has meant reconsidering methodological approaches and underlying theories of knowledge which inform these approaches. For example, is anxiety measurable? Is it a stable personality trait or an emotion that is shaped in social contexts, such as classrooms? After all, how we conceive emotions directly influences the choices that we make as researchers.

At this point, and in order to speak about the experience of language anxiety, Professor Horwitz used an analogy of a ‘pink dress’ to indicate one of the most likely origins of this emotion. This analogy came from her experience. She explained how her mother would buy her frilly

² The titles of Professor Dewaele’s and Professor Horwitz’s plenary lectures were: *The affective dimensions of foreign language learning* and *How research on language learner anxiety and beliefs about language learning helps teachers understand the experience of second language learning*, respectively.

dresses for presents when she was younger, and the acute feeling of discomfort she experienced while wearing them – albeit for a short period! This, she opined, is likely to be a similar experience for many language learners, that is, they are being asked to do something that is particularly uncomfortable for them, something akin to wearing a pink dress in which they feel inauthentic. Indeed, language is so tied up with our identity that speaking a FL can quickly make us feel like we are inhabiting ‘another person’. She felt that a certain amount of language anxiety is inherent in language learning, that the notion of ‘facilitating anxiety’ – a positive anxiety that enables learning – may be a dangerous idea that could encourage teachers to increase anxiety to the detriment of the learners. She also talked about whether language anxiety is a learning issue or performance issue or both, and how some teachers and/or learning programmes may induce anxiety – factors that many of us may find relevant to our own classrooms.

I expected Professor Horwitz to talk about the crucial notion of identity when considering learners’ anxiety. However, her willingness to refer to her own personal experience was, for me, an example of a researcher disclosing in order to illustrate theory through anecdote and narrative. Just as the personal and scholarly in written texts reveal a particular researcher stance and identity, so they can impart similar qualities to presentations. In other words, they interest and engage participants – especially early-career researchers. This is of particular importance in a conference on the theme of classroom-oriented research, where a significant number of participants are likely to be teacher-researchers.

3) Thirdly, I would like to mention briefly a researcher from India, Sarat Kumar Doley, and his presentation³. My interest here was to attend a session that seemed to be far removed from my own context. The central theme was of disciplinary problems in large classes. It quickly became clear to those attending the session that Sarat was sharing a powerful reflection - both personal and professional - based on his own experience. He cited his disenchantment with classroom management theories that he believed do not recognise the complex and messy dynamic that is classroom life, and that his inspiration and determination to succeed as a teacher came from a well-known local teacher who inspired by example, caring and working for the students. The challenges faced by this teacher-researcher were daunting: 162 students (17-18 year-olds) in the classroom, and a mixture of castes with tribal and linguistic affiliations that could lead, in Sarat’s words, to ‘irreconcilable social and religious values’. A compelling part of his presentation, along with the rich description of his teaching context, was his appeal to those in the

room to discuss and suggest possible ways forward in trying to deal with such challenges. Just the idea of the teacher circulating the room was quickly quashed as Sarat told us that there was not sufficient space between the long benches for the teacher to reach many of the students.

In relation to Sarat’s presentation, his honesty in stating that management theories provided little support for his own context was admirable. Further, his appeal to those present to discuss possible approaches to the difficulties he faced also demonstrated the need for researchers to constantly question the dynamic relationship between theory and practice. This led me to reflect on the crucial notion of context, and how classroom research deals with the messy and complex - characteristics that are not always evident in journal articles. Becoming a researcher, then, is often a struggle to understand, engage and deal with our own contexts, and the opportunity to present and discuss at conferences allows us to affirm our identities as researchers. This is often done through narration and incorporating our own perspectives and experiences into the presentations on our research.

These, then, were just three of the many excellent presentations that made up the conference programme in Konin.

In many respects, conference presentations can be viewed as ‘stories’, narratives that embody the way a researcher wants to position themselves and to portray the subject under discussion. In terms of the presentations mentioned in this article, the presenters engaged with the dynamic interplay between theory and practice. They also included learner voices as well as their own experiences when addressing their given themes. In a conference on classroom-oriented research, exploring the interaction between theory and research is vital, because both teachers and researchers have to be able to see the relevance of research to their own contexts. Theory divorced from practice is likely to be of little interest to many practitioners.

My research focuses on the affective domain, but, in my view, these presentations were of interest to all researchers, regardless of one’s own interests. They shed light on key aspects of researcher identity. Firstly, and with reference to Professors Dewaele and Horwitz, they made established researchers appear approachable and concerned with similar issues to those many of us face - this in itself was encouraging. Secondly, all three speakers drew us into the world of research and the rich possibilities that we can eventually discover in our own contexts. They made research look rewarding, stimulating, motivating, and doable. Finally, by drawing upon their own experience, they helped bridge the gap between research(ers) - and a perception of them as distant and difficult – and the many teachers

³ The title of Sarat Kumar Doley’s presentation was ‘An Indian classroom: revisiting the concept of discipline in classroom management theories’.

and teacher-researchers around the globe trying to reach a deeper understanding of their own contexts.

All these factors are of particular relevance when trying to encourage practitioner research and development of a solid identity as a researcher. Attending conferences is part of the process of becoming a researcher and being a little more knowledgeable about how to do research. Reflecting on the interplay between theory and research also affords the chance to reflect on our research and on ourselves as researchers – a key objective of the Research SIG.

Indeed, comparing my trip from Portugal to Poland with Sarat's 24-hour trip from India to Konin was a humble reminder of the lengths which some teachers researching their own classrooms will go to in the search for answers and understanding of their journeys as researchers.

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'Innovating in ELT research': TEC14 pre-conference event, 20 February 2014, Hyderabad, India

This one-day workshop, facilitated by Prof. Paul Gunashekar (EFL University, Hyderabad), Prof. Rama Mathew (Delhi University) and Richard Smith (University of Warwick, UK), was organized by The British Council India for teachers and teacher educators interested in engaging in ELT research, maybe for the first time. The workshop featured presentations by the first winners of British Council India's English Language Teaching Research Partnership (ELTReP) awards and was supported by Research SIG. Congratulations to the winners of the prizes we offered to participants – Sujata Noronha and Robert Slattery – whose reflections we reproduce below:

(1) Reflections by Sujata Noronha

'Innovating in English Language Teaching Research' – a string of 6 words that left me both intrigued and curious to find out more. I signed up for the workshop, which was a Pre-Conference Event to the 2014 TEC (Teacher Educators Conference), organised annually by the British Council in India.

As one mentally prepares to participate in a workshop one begins to pick up soft signs of what is to come. My first sign of this being an intimate, non-threatening space came by way of an email request. The requirement was for every ELTReP Awardee to prepare a short 5–7 minute narrative on their research journey. "Ahh" I thought, "a narrative within the confines of a Research workshop. That IS innovating!"

Research as an area of study has claimed for itself a fairly lofty position. Most 'lay' people believe that it is an area that must belong only to academic minds. This PCE chose to take an alternate path. It attempted, quite successfully, to debunk the idea that research is an elite preoccupation. There has been a call for all educators to engage with the idea of research, and the path chosen for this initiation with us was in the form of an introductory workshop to research methodology.

I was struck by the informal and warm atmosphere created by seating participants at tables and allowing the natural flow of conversation and introductions to overcome barriers of a new unfamiliar environment.

The innovation for language teaching research lay in the design of this workshop, which was well-organized and fluid. Listening, speaking, reading, writing – these were all there in the design of this ELT workshop and were well-facilitated.

Dr. Richard Smith began the workshop by stressing how it would be participatory and joking that participants would work while the experts watched, and this was exactly what did not happen. One of the most innovative approaches was to demonstrate how mentoring talk can support thinking through a problem into a coherent research question – with Dr. Richard Smith, Professor Rama Matthew and Professor Paul Gunashekar presenting mentoring dialogues at centre stage. Paul kept us alert by taking on the stage name ‘Richard’ while playing a teacher in the Rama Matthew High School! But, fun aside, observing this careful role play brought to the fore the process, the moments of quiet reflection, the questioning, the channelling, the scaffolding, that talking with a colleague can bring to developing a research mind.

Sessions moved quite seamlessly from a general overview of what research is to the stages in research to sharing of present research experiences by ELTReP award-winners. On reflection it is quite startling how easily we moved from research as a concept/phenomenon that happens ‘out there’ into the space of thinking of ourselves as researchers and then encouraging and supporting others to think of their research possibilities.

I will look back on this workshop as a first step, a gentle entry into the common parlour of enquiry and research in ELT for people who work within the field, knowing that there is more to learn and question and that ELT research engagement is a necessary and essential act of professional commitment to the field.

2) Reflections by Robert Slattery

The pre-conference event was great if you can ever describe a workshop as great. Great is an emotional term, maybe a motivational term. In this context I wish to reflect on the general objectives.

For me there were two objectives. The general direct objective was to convince us, if we needed convincing, that research for practitioners is not only important, but also not a big deal. The indirect objective was at least as important for me. It was that we are all companions. We are working together as researchers. We can get help from other fellow researchers. On top of this, the message also came through strong and clear that the facilitators were ready to help us. Hence the workshop was great and made me feel great.

Regarding individual sessions, after the introductory session outlining the details and with a comforting word

to us ELTReP awardees not to feel nervous in presenting the progress of our research to the group, we moved on to the activity-based learning.

In group C, Meganathan, Mathuse, Degamber and I presented where we were. Richard – the real Richard, and not Paul as Richard – was invaluable in giving feedback. I was eager to make my presentation and get help. I really believe that my topic ‘Teaching of English Grammar in Hindi-medium secondary schools’ is very important for our students. Research can support English-medium education and a better chance for pupils to get good jobs. Why can’t we get our Hindi-medium students to a good standard of English and also a chance for a good job? One objective of the session was to help us awardees and certainly in our group the objective was fulfilled.

The afternoon was devoted to helping the future researchers in groups to present their possible research project within a framework of stating the problem, forming research questions, outlining methods for getting information to help answer the questions, and a time frame. Before the group work, role-plays on how to mentor were given by Richard, Rama and Paul. Then we, awardees, became the monitors for the future researchers. It was interesting for me to see that most of the time was spent in defining what the research problem was! Making a poster, learning about the projects of the other posters, reflecting, and sticking suggestions on the posters was a real learning exercise. So what did I learn today? First of all, not to be too ambitious, good advice but not easy to follow! Secondly, that there is a large research team of other researchers to advise and guide me!

What else could we have done? Started earlier to give us more time; spent some time on the use of research tools such as how to design a good questionnaires, interview techniques, and so on.

And finally, what is my next step? Probably I will try to look for more literature connected with my topic, while conducting interviews with the teachers of English in my focus group. Any class observation is not possible as from now till April as there will be exams and holidays. Of course I will also surely be in contact with some of my companion researchers. Great!

IATEFL ReSIG Pre-Conference Event 'Teachers Research!' 1 April 2014, Harrogate

(1) Background - Richard Smith

'Teachers Research!' was a special participant-centred day dedicated to research *by* teachers *for* teachers. The day was structured around short presentations by poster followed by informal discussion, in combination with commentary and open discussion sessions involving Dick Allwright, Anne Burns and Donald Freeman as guest commentators. With the permission of all participants, we have made [videos and photos of the day](#) available on the Research SIG website.

The title 'Teachers Research!' echoes the title of the 'Teachers Develop Teachers Research' (TDTR) series of conferences, started off in 1992 at Aston University, UK. Organized jointly by IATEFL's Research and Teacher Development SIGs, the last of these conferences, to our knowledge, took place in Chile in the early 2000s. We hoped that this 2014 Pre-Conference Event would revive the spirit of TDTR as expressed by Julian Edge in 1991 - 'there is one main criterion which a participant presentation should meet: it must be in the nature of a report on the speaker's experience of carrying out some investigation into his/her own teaching context, along with a statement of outcomes in terms of personal and/or professional development' (*Research News - The Newsletter of the IATEFL Research SIG No. 1 June 1991*: 17). For the philosophy underlying the 'participant-centred' design of the day, see Barfield, A. & Smith, R. (1999). [Teacher-learner autonomy: the role of conference and workshop design](#). In *Proceedings of Teachers Develop Teachers Research (TDTR) 4* (CD-ROM). Whitstable, Kent: IATEFL.

We hoped that there would be opportunities to present, discuss, listen, learn and get feedback for: people completely new to teacher-research (TR), but interested in it; people doing TR who'd like the opportunity to present informally and get some feedback (e.g. in a group, talking next to a poster to a few people); people working with teachers who'd like to introduce them to TR, and who would like to discuss this in an informal atmosphere with others; teacher educators already supporting teachers in TR and wishing to share ideas and experience and get feedback; and people with ideas they want to discuss about what TR 'should' be like.

(2) Report of the Day – Ana Inés Salvi

Introduction to the day and first morning session

Richard Smith and Sarah Brewer (Coordinator and Events Coordinator of the Research SIG, respectively) introduced the event, before asking participants to write down their own questions and expectations for the day. These queries were rich and varied, including how to do teacher research, what methodology best suits teacher research, how to ensure that students benefit from teacher research, how to support teacher research, what the difference is between academic and teacher research, whether and how teacher research should influence policy, how teacher research has developed in the last twenty years around the world, and where to publish and access teacher research accounts. (A complete list of participants' questions and expectations, and a video of this session are accessible on the Research SIG website).

Eight presenters then introduced their posters to the audience in three minutes each, after which participants moved around the room approaching the posters of their interest and engaging in a dialogue with presenters and other participants alike. **Christina Gkonou** talked about 'Research in Action: teaching reading strategies for IELTS'; **Katie Moran**, 'First experience of Exploratory Action Research: Improving Oral Presentations'; **Becky Steven & Jessica Cobley**, 'Researching ways to guide our students to develop their speaking fluency'; **Esma Asuman Eray**, 'Using online articles to improve learners' vocabulary storage'; **Jayne Pearson**, 'Action Research on Participation and Control in EAP Writing Assessment'; **Bushra Ahmed Khurram**, 'Promoting Learner Involvement in a Large university-level-ESL Class held in Difficult Circumstances'; and **Elena Oncevska**, 'Outside the comfort zone: An experiment in group argumentative writing'. (The abstracts, pictures, and video-recorded oral introductions of these poster presentations can be found on the website). The session was closed by a 10-minute commentary on these posters by Dick Allwright, Anne Burns and Donald Freeman (also on the website).

Second morning session

With refreshing coffee and biscuits, the second morning session kicked off. In the same manner as the previous session, nine presenters introduced their posters before engaging in conversation with members of the audience who wanted to know more about their topics. **Clare Fielder** discussed 'Action Research on Learner-Directed Feedback in essay writing courses'; **Yasmin Dar**, 'An Exploratory Practice Classroom Research Project'; **Angie (Akile) Nazim & Emily Mason**, 'Preparing Students for an Academic Presentation Maximising Class Time'; **Oriana Onate**, 'Attributions to Success and Failure at Learning English at Universidad de La Frontera, Temuco, South of Chile'; **Martin Dutton &**

Arizio Sweeting, 'Improving Awareness of Connected Speech for the Cambridge Teaching Knowledge Test: Knowledge About Language (English)'; **Ana Inés Salvi**, 'Issues in classroom-based Practitioner Research'; and **Cynthia James**, 'Creativity in the Language Classroom'. (The abstracts, pictures, and video-recorded oral introductions are all on the website).

Afternoon session

Immediately after lunch we had a lively general discussion of issues in teacher-research. Originally this was planned as a Q & A session with Dick Allwright, Anne Burns and Donald Freeman but it became more participant-centred than that. Forty minutes long and not to be missed! (Again, you can access it via our website).

After this engaging general discussion, five poster presentations on supporting teacher research were introduced and participants were invited to look at them and talk to their presenters. **Harry Kuchah & Richard Smith** discussed 'A CAMELTA Teacher Association Research project'; **Inés Miller**, together with some of her inspiring Brazilian students, 'Exploratory Practice in initial teacher education: teacher educator and teacher-learner voices'; **Judith Hanks**, 'Teachers working with Exploratory Practice (EP) in an EAP context'; **Daniel Xerri & Odette Vassallo**, 'Enhancing Teachers' Research Engagement through Learner Corpora Analysis'; and **Paula Rebolledo & Tom Connelly**, 'Supporting Teacher Research in China' (see website!).

Final reflections

At the end of the day, participants in 'Teachers Research!' were asked to write down their reflections, and invited to hand them in if they had no objections to them being shared more widely. More specifically, they were asked to reflect on 1) highlights of the day, 2) what they had learned, and 3) what they were planning to do from now. Regarding the first question, many participants highlighted the free-flow, participatory nature of the event, the opportunity to talk to our three commentators, and the varied and creative poster presentations, among other aspects. In response to the second question, participants reported having learned ways of engaging in teacher research; alternative, perhaps relatively informal, ways of sharing teacher research; and that teacher research is tightly intertwined with teaching and learning, among other things. Answers to the third question varied from humorous ones such as 'What's next? Going to the pub', to plans to share what had been learned in this event with colleagues, to start doing research, and to explore what has been learned in the last twenty years or so about teacher research (and all participants' reflections are accessible through our website).

'Teacher Researchers in Action', 27-28 June 2014, Gediz University, Izmir, Turkey

Obie Noe B. Madalang
(Mountain Province State Polytechnic College Bontoc, Mountain Province, Philippines)

After teaching in an exclusive university for the wealthy for nearly two decades, my homing instinct led me to my birthplace to retire and till the land my parents left me - not to teach.

But my obvious presence in our sleepy, laid back town invited offers for me to go back to teaching. I accepted to teach English for one whole year in our local public high school and decided that there was too much work to be done with too little support from the educational system especially for innovative and responsive teaching to give the children the skills they really need. I called it quits before the system would turn me into a robot devoid of emotion and conscience.

I went on to try the local college. The set-up was better for I was given the freedom to decide what was best for my less privileged students desperately dreaming of a better future and better opportunities through college education.

The working environment in the state college is highly competitive but not in terms of job performance. I had nothing to turn to in terms of professional development. I see traditional and usually futile English teaching practices all over the place with colleagues not minding if those practices and methods are yielding positive results in the students or not. Making college student speak and write in English is almost impossible with their English proficiency of a third grader—it was an uphill climb I had to brave alone.

As a desperate move, I ventured to research tools that would make my job more efficient. I wandered into cyberspace and the lucky winds swept me to the IATEFL Research SIG site, which opened the floodgates of opportunities for me for research including professional organizations and resource websites such as that of The International Research Foundation (TIRF) and finally to an international research conference in enchanting Turkey!

Never had I dreamt of setting foot in a foreign land. IATEFL made that possible. Never had I realized that teaching English could be so full of questions. The conference at Gediz University, Izmir, Turkey provided some answers, which made me see my job and my life in a completely different perspective.

The 35-hour trip to Turkey was daunting to consider but the scholarship granted to me by ReSIG and the constant encouragement from ReSIG coordinator Dr Richard Smith solidified my resolve even if it meant I had to process my travel documents at an unprecedented speed - at least by Philippine standards. The trip to Manila, where I had to apply for passport and visa, is 13 bumpy hours by bus, no plane. I had to take three round trips to complete the travel documents alone not to mention the heat, pollution, traffic and unbelievably long queues; I thought I would arrive first before dawn just to find out that many had camped out the night before.

In Izmir, I got to meet and listen to the front-liners of ELT research. All the participants coming from different nations and educational institutions were genuinely friendly, which lightened my heavy jet lag and the strange feeling of being the only Asian at the conference. I guess that is the common characteristic of English Language Teachers—being friendly and most of all open-minded.

Dr Anne Burns of Australia left me thinking of inviting my colleagues in our school to undertake a collaborative action research project on English classroom practices. I made notes on how important individual research is but how collaborative research could paint a wider, deeper and more vivid picture of an issue than one undertaken by a single person.

Well, I thought I knew everything about English teaching but I forgot to consider the importance of ‘understanding issues’ as against my usual practice of jumping in to ‘find solutions to said issues.’ It was so kind of Dr Dick Allwright from the UK to point that out in his plenary. For example, why did I not think of asking the question: “Why can’t my students converse in even simple English sentences?” rather than: “What activities shall I have my students do to make them converse in English?”

ReSIG coordinator Dr Richard Smith, in his plenary talk, reminded me that I am not alone in this world in going through difficulties in the teaching profession. There are other teachers/researchers who are even in worse conditions but are able to find ways to be effective in their teaching. Taking inspiration from others’ experiences, associating with colleagues, exploring possibilities, and other encouraging principles were things I learned which were never taught in college.

As well as the plenary talks, the teacher-researchers who presented their papers were inspiring. I came to

hear about ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) for the first time. There were even studies done about translation, achievement attribution, peer observation, communication inhibitions and anxieties, and many others. Even though I was dizzy due to the sudden change of time zone and the surreal feeling of being in a foreign land, I managed to take notes for further review under normal conditions.

To teach, get paid, grow old, retire and die -- that had been my timeline in life. After Teacher Researchers in Action, I want to reset my timeline. May I insert: “engage in English Language research more, go to Manchester for the next IATEFL conference, enrich my students’ lives, leave a legacy... and die *happy*”?

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Outreach

An interim report on the CAMELTA Teacher Association Research project

Harry Kuchah
(IATEFL Research SIG Outreach Coordinator)

Earlier this year, a report was presented by Harry Kuchah and Richard Smith in Issue 236 of IATEFL Voices about the first steps of a Teacher Association (TA) research project jointly developed and run by the Cameroon English Language teachers' Association (CAMELTA) and IATEFL Research SIG. The notion of TA research, formulated by ReSIG coordinator Richard Smith, emerged from a range of problems, needs and opportunities that became apparent in teachers' interactions during CAMELTA's 12th Annual Conference and TESOL Symposium in August 2013 in Yaounde, Cameroon (see Issue 236 of *Voices*, pp. 22-23 for details of how the idea developed as well as of the processes involved in the project). This report provides an update of what CAMELTA and ReSIG have been able to do since the first report on the project.

As reported in issue 236 of *Voices*, the first steps of the CAMELTA research project included collating and categorising all research questions written by CAMELTA teachers during their August 2013 conference as well as designing a questionnaire which would be distributed to teachers around the country. Between October 2013 and February 2014, questionnaires were distributed to teachers during CAMELTA regional chapter events. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: Section 'A' sought to identify the current teaching situation of each respondent and gathered information about the type of institution (primary, secondary or tertiary) within which they worked as well as the location (urban, semi-urban or rural) of their schools and also the average number of students in the classes they taught. Section 'B', the main part of the questionnaire, consisted of three open-ended questions, each requiring respondents to provide as detailed information as possible. The three questions were as follows:

1. Please tell the story of a recent successful experience in your teaching - what was successful and what made it successful, do you think?

2. What are the major problems you face in your teaching situation - what is problematic and why?
3. Please describe anything you have done to address (some of) the problems in (2) above. Was this successful? Why / Why not?

In the last part (Section C) respondents were invited to add any comments about the questionnaire as well as provide their names and contact details if they wanted their names to be quoted alongside their statements in subsequent reports on the research project. This was mainly because, being a project by/with members of a community of practitioners, it may be useful to encourage further communication and collaboration amongst members even beyond the research.

In all, a total of 504 questionnaires were returned to CAMELTA's Vice-President for Research and Projects, who arranged, with £200 special funding from ReSIG, for all responses to be typed and recorded in electronic form. At the 48th IATEFL annual conference in Harrogate ReSIG committee members met with representatives from CAMELTA and set up a team of volunteers to analyse the data collected from CAMELTA teachers. The team - made up of Richard Smith, Mark Wyatt and Sian Etherington (for ReSIG) as well as Harry Kuchah and Gladys Focho (for CAMELTA) - agreed to undertake a preliminary analysis of a data set of 12 responses.

Preliminary findings from the data analysis show a range of problems faced by teachers, from school-based to family and community/cultural factors. Despite the wide range of problems encountered, the evidence from just these 12 responses is that English teachers in Cameroon may be employing a variety of pragmatic strategies to motivate and facilitate learning. Their accounts of successful experiences and reasons for their successes involved diverse classroom techniques and activities including amongst other things the following practices (with sample excerpts from teachers' responses:

1. Strategies for student motivation

'Recently I used motivational assessment to move a group of slow learners in form four to developing interest in English language. Because I gave exactly what I had taught and did in class as an exercise in a test. They were able to score good marks and now believe in themselves and are participating actively in class.'

2. Selecting relevant and familiar materials

'What made this lesson a success is the fact that students could identify themselves with some accident scenes. At the end of the day they are able to [different ways in which they can] take precautions. How they walk along the road, when the board a [motor] bike they ask the rider to ride gently with care. With fire and

sprains they had to really be careful. With this, I say the lesson was actually the most successful since students have participated or seen their parents, friends and relations suffer from accidents.'

3. Group work/peer support/peer feedback:

'At the practice stage, students were shared in groups to write articles of their choices and they were given fifteen minutes to do so. At the end of this stage, various groups read their articles for comments and corrections to be made [by their peers]...Most of the students were eager to read their articles to the hearing of everybody and some were even disgruntled when I did not call them up to read.'

4. Classroom management strategies

'From the outset, it was quite an arduous task facing a class of about 200 students for the first time. There was the atmosphere of lousiness with me shouting "stop noise", "sit down", "come here", "go out", "kneel" etc. Strategically, I arrived at numbering or according each student a number meant for identification. These, I used to ask them questions during lessons, given that a student never knows when the teacher will surprisingly call his/her number to answer a question, all stayed focused and very alert during the lessons.'

5. Teacher and student creativity

'I grappled with the lesson preparation until an idea of a picture came to mind. I decided I will introduce the poem and call my students to draw boats, canoes, big ship and all the locomotives of the sea as best as they could. This they did in all excitement. Seeing the entire chalkboard covered with boats, ships of all kinds and sizes, I kick-started reading the poem. Whatever we saw [which] was present in the poem but was lacking on the board, the students, 'my artists in class' added on the board. At the end the hitherto considered difficult poem was clear in the minds of the learners.'

Conclusion

The team of volunteer analysts will be bringing together their different individual analyses of the data and mapping out a coherent way of presenting the findings from this first phase of the data analysis. CAMELTA's input is vital at this point, given that the findings of the study will have to be presented in ways that are relevant to their membership. So far, preliminary analysis shows that a bottom up approach to developing and disseminating good practice can benefit grass roots communities of practitioners working together, albeit with support from other professional groups like IATEFL ReSIG, to identify their own problems and seek solutions from within their membership through systematic procedures of sharing proven solutions. This might be a practitioner-centred way of engaging teachers working in difficult circumstances in the process of finding solutions to their day-to-day challenges rather than depending on top-down directives from Ministry of Education officials who may

not be up-to-date with the actual classroom realities that teachers and learners encounter.

RICELT: Creating a research community in Chilean ELT

Loreto Aliaga, Maria-Jesus Inostroza, Paula Rebolledo, Gloria Romero and Pia Tabali (the committee of RICELT)

This is a report about a new association of ELT researchers in Chile – RICELT – whose early development was supported by IATEFL Research SIG. The report was written collectively by the committee of RICELT.

Empirical knowledge about the English Language Teaching (ELT) reality in Chile is scarce. There are few accessible articles on ELT in Chile and these have little impact on teaching practice, consistently evidencing a mismatch between theory and practice. Similarly, there is a clear need to promote teacher-research initiatives in the Chilean context, where local expertise (that of both academics and teachers) is undervalued.

In this context, in 2012 a group of Chilean EFL teachers requested the IATEFL Research SIG to support ELT research in Chile by promoting all kinds of research, from relatively academic to more teacher-friendly. As a result, IATEFL Research SIG provided space on their website to share an ELT bibliography about the Chilean context. This gave a great platform for more Chilean teachers to know about ELT research in Chile.

In April 2014, five Chilean researchers got together at the IATEFL International Conference in Harrogate, UK, and decided to further share their concerns and motivation to promote ELT research in Chile. This meeting gave life to RICELT (Red de Investigadores Chilenos / as en ELT -- the Network of Chilean ELT Researchers). Currently, we are over two hundred members in Chile and abroad who are interested in promoting a Chilean-based community interested in ELT research and knowledge.

RICELT aims at creating awareness of the need and the relevance of creating a knowledge community in ELT in Chile. Consequently schoolteachers, university teachers, professors and researchers, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and staff from the English Open Doors Programme (EODP) from the Ministry of Education are involved in this network.

Further main aims of RICELT include:

1. To make ELT Chilean research more visible and accessible.
2. To bridge between Chilean ELT researchers and governmental institutions (EODP) and associations / agencies like IATEFL Chile, TESOL, American Embassy RELO, British Council, etc).
3. To promote dialogue and collaboration among different ELT actors in Chile.
4. To promote and share teacher-research initiatives.

RICELT was officially launched and presented to its potential members at the IATEFL Chile conference at a discussion panel titled "RICELT: Building an ELT Knowledge Community in Chile" in July 2014. This panel was chaired by Dr Paula Rebolledo (RICELT) and Dr Richard Smith (Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick) and it aimed at raising awareness of the relevance of creating a knowledge-based community in ELT in Chile. The panel was composed of Andrea Robles (school-based teacher-researcher), Liliana Castillo (undergraduate student, PUCV), Katharina Glas (university-based teacher, PUCV), Nicolas Araya (post-graduate student, UMCE) and Alicia Paez (Ministry of Education, EODP). The audience (50 people) and the panelists engaged in a fruitful discussion about the need for:

1. greater accessibility to research that has been done by university-based academics, school teachers and undergraduate students in the area of ELT
 2. connecting key actors e.g. schools and universities
- and
3. a more bottom-up, contextually oriented approach to research to bridge a perceived theory/research vs. practice divide.

Last October, and sponsored by ChileGlobal Seminars UK, RICELT organised the 7th ChileGlobal Seminar UK, titled 'EFL in Chile', at the Institute of Education, University of London. The event aimed at sharing current research in EFL in Chile. The topics reflected the diversity of research, as well as the need to keep working for our project and network. The programme included five presentations of Chilean postgraduate students, all RICELT members in the UK, and the insightful comments of Dr Richard Smith. Over 30 attendees participated in the seminar discussion; most of them were Chilean teachers of English studying on postgraduate programmes in the UK.

Currently, RICELT and EODP are working together to create a database of the current research carried out in Chile in English Language Teaching, by involving scholars in Chilean universities. Similarly, we keep updating our database related to different ELT research projects carried out in the country.

RICELT's upcoming projects include the 1st Meeting for Chilean ELT Researchers, as well as seminars aiming at empowering local expertise and promoting research in Chile.

More information:

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IATEFL RESEARCH SIG DAY – MANCHESTER 2015
CONFERENCE DAY 2 – SUNDAY 12th APRIL
ROOM: CENTRAL 8

2.1	10:25 - 11:10	45 min. Workshop	<p>Exploring a new global framework for continuing professional development Paul Braddock (British Council, Spain)</p> <p>My workshop aims to engage teachers in a dialogue about continuing professional development (CPD). Using the British Council's global CPD framework, we will examine twelve core competencies, their components and a number of associated resources in order to find the answers to some of the key issues relating to professional development.</p>
11:10 - 11:45		Coffee Break	
2.2	11:45 - 12:15	30 min. Talk	<p>Towards initiating YELTA Nagm-Addin Saif (Technical Industrial Institute & Al-Saeed University, Yemen)</p> <p>In absence of any formal professional association for EFL teachers in Yemen, this paper will report qualitative research findings on how teachers perceive the idea of setting up a Yemeni English Language Teachers' Association (YELTA). It will help the researcher to develop a constitution for the intended association, its objectives and its major professional concerns.</p>
2.3	12:30 - 13:00	30 min. Talk	<p>Researching professional development with the use of the narrative approach Volha Arkhipenka (University of Manchester, UK)</p> <p>What is the narrative approach to research and what is its usefulness for research in TESOL? Within this talk, having explained what the narrative approach to research is, I will share my experience of using it to explore the professional development of English language teachers on an MA TESOL course.</p>
13:00 - 14:20		Lunch break	
2.4	14:20 - 14:50	30 min. Talk	<p>Teacher voices: does research meet practice? Zarina Markova (South-West University, Bulgaria)</p> <p>TEFL research, its relevance to practice and the seemingly irreconcilable distinction between teachers and researchers have been a topic frequently discussed on different ELT forums. In this discourse teachers are often said to be sceptical about the value of research to their teaching situations. But are they? This talk explores the attitudes of 199 survey respondents to present-day TEFL research.</p>
2.5	15:05 - 15:35	30 min. Talk	<p>Developing the Survey of ELT Research in India Lina Mukhopadhyay (The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India)</p> <p>This talk provides an overview of parameters and procedures adopted for the Survey of ELT Research in India (a collaboration between British Council India, EFL University and Warwick University), and presents some preliminary findings. Common topics of research are highlighted, and the relationship of the research studies in these areas to specific concerns in the Indian context is explained.</p>
2.6	15:50 - 16:35	45 min.	<p>Open Forum All – those new and old to the SIG alike -- are welcome to this session where we reflect on the SIG's activities over the year and plan ahead to the coming year.</p>
16:35 - 17:10		Coffee Break	
PLEASE NOTE THAT WE WILL BE CHANGING ROOMS AFTER THE COFFEE BREAK & MOVING TO COBDEN 3-4			
2.7	17:10 - 17:40	30 min.	<p>Evaluating an action research scheme for English language teachers Simon Borg (Slovenia)</p> <p>Current thinking in teacher professional development advocates a move away from 'training course' models to approaches which engage teachers in job-embedded inquiry. Action research is one such approach and this talk evaluates the design, implementation and outcomes of a new action research scheme for English language teachers. Based on this evaluation, some principles for supporting action research will be identified.</p>
2.8	17:45 - 18:15	30 min.	<p>The impact of action research on teachers' continuous professional development Emily Edwards (University of New South Wales, Australia)</p> <p>How do teachers benefit from doing action research, and importantly, how can the positive impact of action research be sustained over time? In this talk I will present findings from a recent study of an innovative action research program in Australia, and then make recommendations that will be relevant to teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) in many ELT contexts.</p>

Back to the front cover

Guillermina Victoria, who has given us permission to use her art work on the front cover of the current (no. 30) and last (no. 29) issues of *ELT Research*, studied for a BA in Drawing at Manuel Belgrano School of Art in Buenos Aires City, Argentina. She has won awards in Buenos Aires province and nationally in Argentina, and participated in numerous exhibitions individually and collectively. She has also acted as a jury member at various artistic events, and her work has appeared in various books and newsletters in different countries.

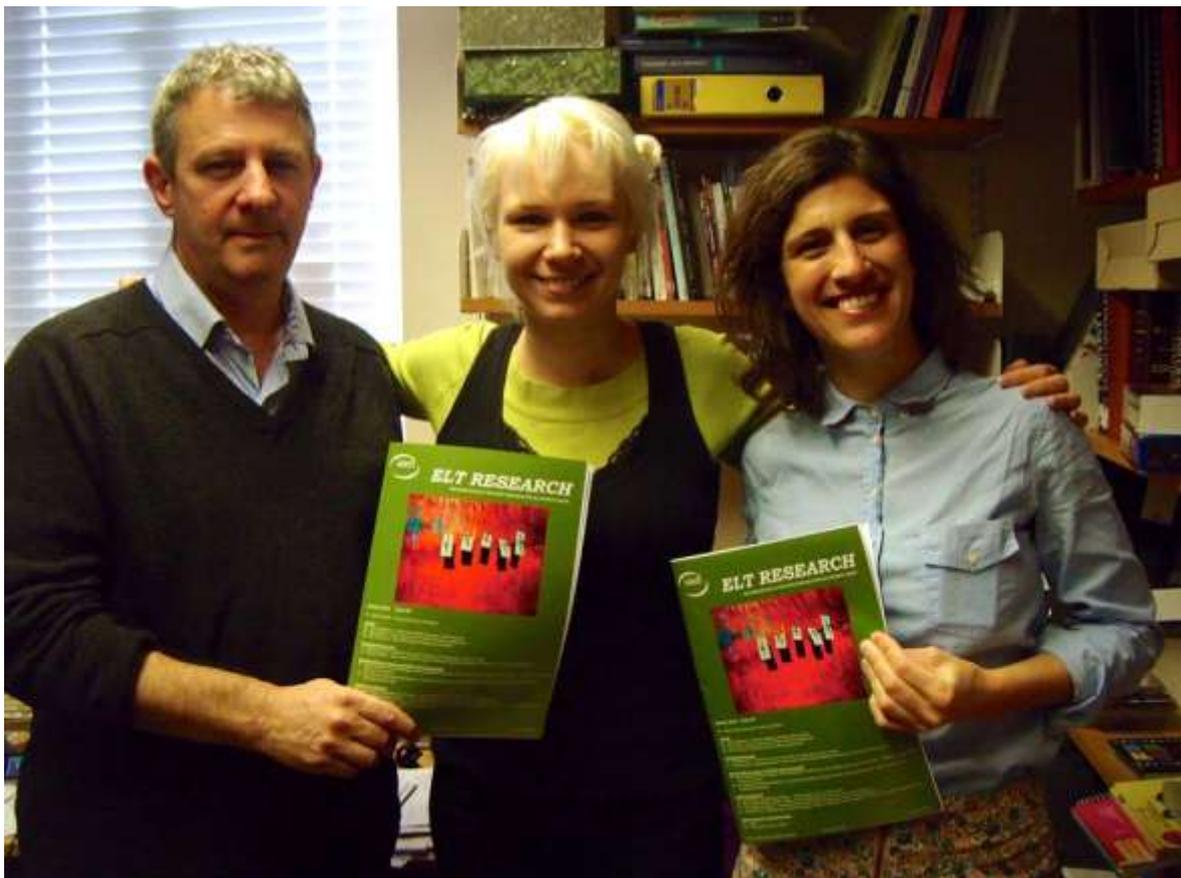
The work of art on the front cover of *ELT Research* 29 (last issue, being held in the photos here) is called 'Open-cast'. According to Guillermina herself, it invites us to reflect on the nutritious and complex bond between nature and humanity. This landscape, in which warm and vibrant colours are protagonists, is interrupted by an electrocardiogram drilling the earth. The work thus offers an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between humans and their environment, in the search for a necessary life equilibrium.

The work of art on the cover of the present issue – 'Singing of my veins' (*Canto de mis venas*) – was created using a mixed drawing technique. Guillermina writes: 'Joined hands, a universal gesture. The crimson intensity represents the singing of the blood and its passions. Communication without barriers from hands that form a chorus'.

For more work by Guillermina Victoria, see her website: <http://wilhelmina18.wix.com/arte-victoria>



Guillermina Victoria



Richard Smith, Gosia Sky and Ana Inés Salvi (ELT Research co-editors)

Research SIG Pre-Conference Event

‘Developing as a Researcher’

10th April 2015, Manchester, UK

A participant-centred day,
with invited commentary and inputs from

Sue Garton, David Nunan and Cynthia White

What does it mean to

be, become or grow

as a 'researcher'?

Whether you are a student, a teacher, an academic or another kind of professional, and wherever you are in your research journey – near the beginning or further along the road – this event will offer a valuable opportunity to step back, reflect and learn from others and share your experiences in a collegial, informal and friendly atmosphere.

Following the format of our very successful 2014 pre-conference event ‘Teachers Research’, the 2015 event will offer a combination of poster presentations, group discussions, panel discussion and sessions around areas of particular concern and interest to participants.

Conference and PCE registration:

<http://www.iatefl.org/annual-conference/manchester-2015>