



ELT RESEARCH

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01 Richard Smith - *Message from the coordinator*

Articles

- 02 Claire Whittaker - *Using the E-delphi technique in ELT research*
05 Mark Wyatt - *Action research on a teacher education programme*
08 She Tsu-husan - *Experience with an online questionnaire*

Practitioner Research

- 11 Katherine Levy - *Verbal praise in the classroom: An exploratory research study*
16 Richard Smith - *Supporting teacher-research: The work of Kenan Dikilitaş and teachers at Gediz University, Izmir*

Research SIG Day papers at IATEFL 2013 (Liverpool)

- 19 James Simpson, Richard Badger, Kathrin Kaufhold, Caroline Dyer, Atanu Bhattacharya and Sunil Shah - *Mobigam: Language on the move in Gujarat*
22 Sara Hannam and Radmila Popovic - *Growing as researchers: Insider/outsider perspectives at work - the case of Serbian teaching and learning*

Conference Reports

- 25 Sarah Mercer and Mirosław Pawlak - *IATEFL Research SIG at TESOL 2013*
26 Steve Walsh and Steve Mann - *'Researching Professional Talk': Facilitators' report (Report 1)*
27 Nasy Inthisone Pfanner - *'Researching Professional Talk': Scholarship winner's report (Report 2)*
29 Sarah Mercer - *'Eliciting data in second language research: Challenges and innovations' - report on the IRIS conference 2013*

Links, Resources, Announcements

- 31 Links
33 Research SIG events in 2014

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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About *ELT Research*

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From the coordinator

Dear RESEARCH SIG members,

As you'll have seen if you've joined the Facebook group (www.facebook.com/groups/iateflresig/) or Yahoo!group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/resig/info/>), the SIG has been quite active since the last issue of *ELT Research*, though this one has been rather long in the making. The Facebook group has rapidly grown in membership – it now has 250 members -- and has served as a useful means for exchanging information about resources, upcoming events, and so on. There've also been some informative discussions of research articles in the Yahoo!Group (450+ members), led by Sarah Mercer (on using language learner histories), Preet Hiradhar (on CALL research) and Graham Hall (on own-language use in language teaching). Our first Yahoo!Group discussion of the year was a follow-up to a webinar by Harry Kuchah and Annamaria Pinter on 'Researching with Children'. The discussion was written up and published in the October 2013 issue of *ELT Journal* (67/4). Please do join our Facebook and Yahoo!Group if you haven't already done so! And if you'd like to lead a research-related discussion on our Yahoo!Group any time, or if you have any ideas for webinars we could organize in the future, please send in your ideas to: resig@iatefl.org!

Membership of the Research SIG itself brings added benefits including receipt of this newsletter, reduced admission to SIG events and the opportunity to apply for scholarships to attend events. Figures for November 2013 showed 276 members – membership has increased gradually since 2010 (there were just over 200 members at that time) and is now above the previous (2005) peak of 268. It is the middlemost SIG (8th out of 15) in terms of size and has healthy reserves though it is not rich, only rarely receiving sponsorship or advertising revenue from publishers as some SIGs regularly do (if you can think of – or are! -- a willing sponsor or advertiser, let us know!).

Since our last newsletter appeared we have organized a successful IATEFL Pre-Conference Event led by Steve Walsh and Steve Mann (see reports on pp. 26-28) and a Research SIG Day of presentations (for two interesting articles arising from the latter see pp. 19-24). At the same conference (in Liverpool in April 2013) we were surprised and happy to receive an award from the 'Fair List' (<http://thefairlist.org/history/>) for the overall gender balance of speakers at our one-day workshops in 2012,

Research SIG also has a diverse and dynamic committee – for full details see <http://resig.weebly.com/committee.html>. For 2013-14 Siân Etherington and Sandie Mourão have stepped in to replace Shaida Mohammadi and Anna Broszkiewicz

as Treasurer and Membership Coordinator, respectively. Yasmin Dar also left the committee, while Deb Bullock and Mark Daubney have joined. Many thanks to those mentioned and to all the committee for their continuing hard work! If you are interested in joining the Research SIG committee please contact me at any time via resig@iatefl.org.

The committee has been discussing how to internationalize SIG activities, and one outcome has been to offer support to events beyond the UK and Europe. Please see the back of this issue for details of events planned for the first half of 2014 – In India and Turkey as well as at the IATEFL conference in Harrogate. As you will see, we are continuing and strengthening our focus on supporting practitioner-research, as was discussed at our committee and Open Forum meetings in Liverpool last year. It's pleasing to see that a number of the twenty-two poster presentations accepted for our 'Teachers Research!' PCE on 1st April have been submitted by SIG members who attended one of our workshops on practitioner research in 2012. We are supporting the June conference in Izmir, Turkey by offering a travel scholarship for one SIG member (application deadline: 30th April) and by providing support for two of the main speakers. Please see the report of my interview with Kenan Dikilitaş, the main organizer of the conference, on pp.16-18. And if you and your institution would like to organize a ReSIG event in the second half of 2014 or in 2015 please get in touch. Another way we have 'internationalized' has involved liaising with the TESOL Research Standing Committee, building on links nurtured by Sarah Mercer and Miroslaw Pawlak earlier this year (see their report on p. 25).

A further new development, as reported on in the latest issue of IATEFL's *Voices* (January-February 2014) – see 'From the Associates' – has been an agreement to provide seed-funding of £200 for a project to be carried out by the Cameroon English Language and Literature Teachers' Association (CAMELTA) in collaboration with ReSIG. In brief, this pioneering example of what we are calling 'teacher association research' will involve 500-1000 CAMELTA members writing reflectively about issues that concern them and reporting on teaching practices that have proved their contextual worth to them.. ReSIG committee members will help with the qualitative analysis of this writing, which will have been typed up with the ReSIG funding. The research will be reported on at the next CAMELTA conference and via *ELT Research*. To our knowledge this is the first research project ever to have been sponsored by the SIG and we shall monitor carefully. If any SIG members would like to join in with analysis of the data please make contact via resig@iatefl.org.

Finally, let me wish you a very happy and richly productive 2014!

Richard Smith, Research SIG coordinator

Articles

Using the E-Delphi Technique in ELT Research

Claire Whittaker

If you need to establish as objectively as possible a consensus of opinion on a complex work-related problem from a group of colleagues who cannot all be assembled at one meeting in a cost effective and quick way then the e-Delphi may provide you with the solution. It can also be useful for ELT research, as I shall attempt to show in this article.

The Delphi Technique ('the Delphi', for short) takes its name from the Greek Oracle Pythia at Delphi who foretold the future. It was first used in 1948 after World War II to ascertain consensus among experts about aspects of future warfare and was developed through the 1950's by Dalkey & Helmer at the Rand Corporation. Since then its usage as a research approach has become widespread, particularly in education, business and healthcare according to Gupta and Clarke (1996). Despite their claim that it is used in education there appears to be little evidence of it being used in ELT research, though it has been used to judge the British Council's ELT Innovations Awards (ELTons), (http://www.britishcouncil.org/eltons-delphi_technique.pdf). The present article serves to address this shortcoming by defining the technique, detailing its characteristics, and describing a study in which a recent modification of the classical Delphi was used, called the e-Delphi.

The Delphi - A Definition

The Delphi, according to a widely cited definition, is 'a method for the systematic solicitation and collection of judgements on a particular topic through a set of carefully designed sequential questionnaires interspersed with summarized information and feedback of opinions derived from earlier responses' (Delbecq et al. in Lindqvist & Nordanger, 2007: 2). The aim of this process is to reach 'a consensus (or convergence) of opinion' (Powell, 2003; Gupta & Clarke, 1996; Rowe & Wright, 1999; Hsu & Sandford, 2007), based on the premise that 'n heads are better than one' (Dalkey in Hsu & Sandford, 2007: 1).

The e-Delphi

Various modifications of the classical Delphi exist, with the most recent being the 'e-Delphi' (Chou, 2002) or 'Real-time Delphi' (Lindqvist & Nordanger, 2007). The

e-Delphi differs from the classical Delphi in that it employs Web based communication, thus shortening the panellists' response time and maintaining the response rate, both of which are limitations of the classical Delphi. Apart from this difference the e-Delphi has the same characteristics and follows the same process as the classical Delphi. One of the e-Delphi's strengths is that it can accommodate a geographical spread of experts and this is one of the reasons why I employed it in the study I conducted into the design of blended learning English courses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is described in this article.

Characteristics of the Delphi

The Delphi has a number of key characteristics including the use of experts, anonymity, rounds, controlled feedback and consensus, which are outlined below:

- The use of experts or panellists - no selection criteria are provided in the literature, but it is recommended that the experts share 'somewhat related backgrounds and experiences concerning the target issue' (Hsu & Sandford, 2007: 3); that they are 'willing and able to make a valid contribution' (Powell, 2003: 379); and that they are 'well informed in the appropriate area' (Yousuf, 2007: 5).

The optimal number of experts is not given in the literature either, although according to Reid in Powell (2003: 378) it can range from 10 to 1685. Fortunately Delbecq et al. in Hsu & Sandford (2007: 3) and Ludwig (1997: 2) suggest more realistic figures of 10-15 and 15-20, respectively.

- (Quasi) Anonymity - McKenna (in Keeney et al., 2001: 197) uses the term quasi-anonymity as the experts may know each other, but their judgements and opinions still remain anonymous. This anonymity allows them the freedom to express their opinions free from group pressures, which should result in them being more forthcoming with their views.
- Rounds or iterations - the Delphi process typically comprises three rounds of questionnaires, although anything up to five rounds is suggested in the literature. However, with more than three rounds it can become difficult to sustain the response rate (Keeney et al., 2001), and furthermore each successive round unearths little new information (Ludwig, 1997; Worthen & Sanders in Yousuf, 2007).
- Controlled feedback - the feedback from each successive round of the Delphi is 'controlled' by the moderator and is used to inform the next round.

- Consensus – although the aim of the Delphi is to reach a consensus of opinion on a topic, much of the literature fails to define what is meant by consensus or determine when it is reached. Indeed, according to Linstone & Turnoff (in Powell, 2007: 379) ‘there seem to be no firm rules for establishing when consensus is reached, although the final round will usually show convergence of opinion’.

What is presented, are a range of percentage levels to signify consensus. Ulschak (1983, in Hsu & Sandford, 2007: 4) recommends ‘having 80% of subjects’ votes fall within two categories on a seven-point scale’ and for Green (1982, in Hsu & Sandford, 2007: 4) ‘at least 70% of Delphi subjects need to rate three or higher on a four point Likert-type scale and the median has to be at 3.25 or higher.’

Using the e-Delphi

Whilst working for the British Council on the Military English Support Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina I redesigned a blended learning English course with the aid of my colleagues. Towards the end of the redesign process I carried out a study to determine if the resultant blend had reflected a principled approach to design and as part of this I collected data from the English instructors to analyse the resultant blend from their perspective using the e-Delphi. I chose the e-Delphi because it could cater for the geographical spread of the instructors and because it seemed to fit well with the collective aspect of action research, the methodology I employed in the study.

The instructors became the e-Delphi experts and they were selected according to their teaching experience and knowledge of the original and resultant blends, and whether they were contactable via email. This meant that at the start of the three-round e-Delphi process, there were 16 experts.

Round One

In Round One the experts were asked three open-ended questions:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current courses?
2. How could the design of the current courses be improved?
3. Which aspects of current course designs are better or worse than previous course designs and why?

Little guidance is provided in the literature on how to write Round One questions apart from that they are intended to generate rich qualitative data as the basis for the Round Two questionnaire. It is therefore important to spend time considering them as they form the basis for the remainder of the study.

The questions were sent to the experts using ‘LimeSurvey’ a web-based tool that allows users to design and collect responses to surveys online. I chose it because it was relatively straightforward to use and because it did not require any specialist coding knowledge as it provided a choice of 25 default question types. Moreover, it could generate both qualitative and quantitative data, which could be exported to Word or SPSS, respectively, for analysis.

Round Two

The results from Round One were studied using content analysis, which is used ‘to reduce [different answers] to manageable and meaningful categories’ (Gillham, 2000: 63). This analysis resulted in the creation of 35 statements for Round Two. Listed below are three example statements:

- The balance of time spent in the classroom, in self-study and on the computer is good
- Testing is an area that needs developing further
- The ratio of one student to one computer is better than two students to one computer

According to the literature, the items in Round Two can be rated or ranked. Given the number of statements I decided they should be individually rated using a 5 point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The experts were asked to rate each statement and a comments box was also provided for each so as to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. 13 out of the original total of 16 experts responded to this task.

Round Three

The mean, mode, median and standard deviation were calculated from the Round Two Likert scale results and Excel tables were created for each of the 35 statements (see: Table 1). These tables were pasted into a Word document along with the collated written comments for each statement. ‘LimeSurvey’ was not used for this round because of reliability problems and because it transpired that it was not versatile enough to handle this amount of data in the chosen format.

Determining consensus

After the third and final round the level of consensus was determined for each of the statements. In this study a high level of consensus was considered to have been reached when 10 or all 11 of the remaining experts’ responses (by this stage a total of 5 experts had dropped out of the process) fell within two adjacent categories on the five-point Likert scale on the third and final round of the Delphi. Moreover, consensus was measured along a continuous rather than a dichotomous scale i.e. degree of consensus rather than consensus or lack of consensus was ascertained for each item. Based on these assumptions a high level of consensus (100% or 91%) was achieved for 20 of the 35 statements (see: Table 2).

Table 1. Round Two Quantitative Results for One Statement

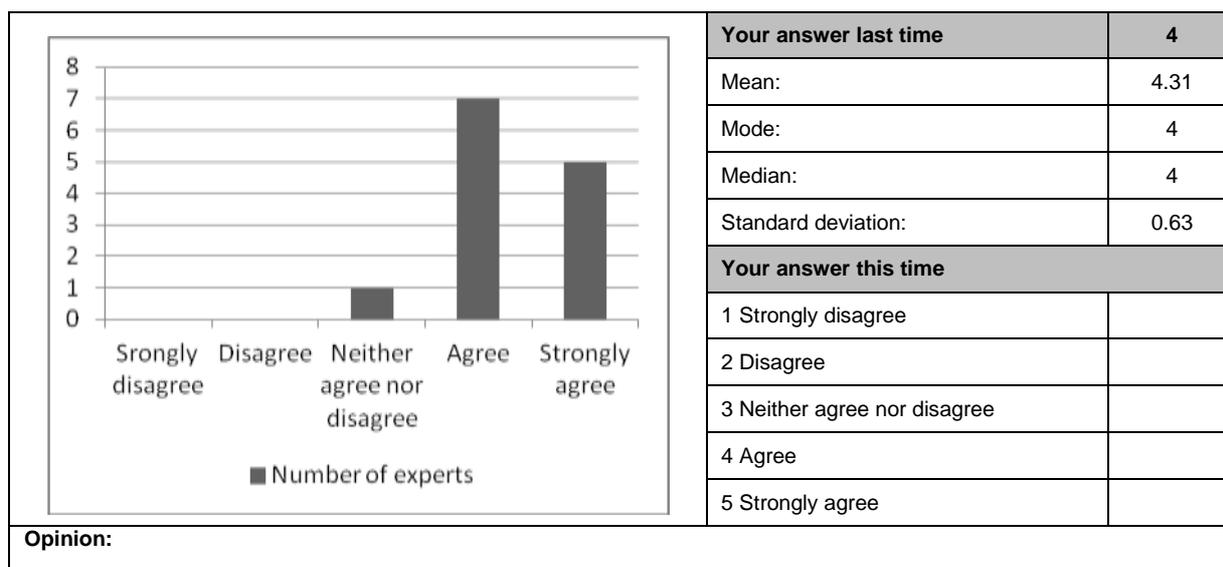


Table 2. Round Three Results

Level of consensus	Number of Statements
100% consensus (11/11 experts)	15
91% consensus (10/11 experts)	5
82% consensus (9/11 experts)	6
73% consensus (8/11 panellists)	7
55% consensus (6/11 experts)	1
45% consensus (5/11 experts)	1

Using the e-Delphi - Challenges

The Delphi has a number of well-documented shortcomings such as the declining response rates through the successive rounds and the time the process takes to conduct, both of which I encountered as five experts dropped out between the 1st and 3rd rounds and the process took 16 weeks in total to complete. According to Delbecq et al. in Hsu & Sandford (2007: 4), 'a minimum of 45 days for the administration of a Delphi study is necessary', roughly equating to two weeks per round. It therefore appears that I may have given the experts in my study too much time to complete each round, and if I were to use this technique again I would be more stringent about the required response times.

In Round Two, I also encountered technical problems with 'LimeSurvey', resulting in the loss of data, which undermined my confidence in the software. Moreover, as a tool it was not flexible enough to include bar charts in the Round Three feedback, so this feedback had to be presented in a Word document. This was the result of an oversight on my part, as I had not considered how I

would present the data from Round Two before I started the e-Delphi process. Lastly, determining consensus and interpreting the quantitative data required a certain amount of mathematical knowhow, which I lacked and therefore, I had to seek support.

Conclusion

Despite these challenges, with a few modifications I would use the e-Delphi again as it allowed me to determine the instructors' opinions on various aspects of the courses without the need to bring them together. Moreover, conducting the e-Delphi was an engaging experience and once I had mastered the maths, calculating the results became a slightly compulsive habit each time a questionnaire was returned. It was also rewarding to see an increased convergence of opinion between Rounds Two and Three, which is the desired outcome of the Delphi. To conclude, I believe that the e-Delphi could be an extremely useful method to establish consensus on specified topics in ELT from groups of experts spread across large geographical areas, in a cost-effective and quick way, and I hope that

Action Research on a Teacher Education Programme

Mark Wyatt

Do teachers' overriding academic concerns limit the extent to which they can grow as action researchers during formal teacher education? And as a result, is it more productive to look for transformative growth in action researchers elsewhere? Borg (2013) suggests this, but much might depend on both the nature of the course and how the teachers' development is investigated. My qualitative study of four teachers of English on a University of Leeds BA TESOL programme in Oman (Wyatt, 2010a) drew longitudinally on observations, interviews and reflective writing to reveal transformative growth, which I have ascribed (e.g. in Wyatt, 2011) to the 'constructivist', context-sensitive nature of the programme (Mann, 2005). Borg's words prompt me to reflect further, though. Was there any wider evidence of other teachers on this programme growing as action researchers, and can additional insights be offered into how they grew? In addressing these questions, I start with a vignette focused on Mohammed (real name used with his written permission), who was not one of the teachers I was formally researching but was someone I mentored in my role as a regional tutor throughout the three-year BA programme.

It was early September, the beginning of the school year. Mohammed was trying out new ideas, gained from the in-service BA TESOL. There had been input in the first eight months on communicative tasks, grouping learners, adapting materials, language acquisition processes. At school, Mohammed taught large classes in narrow classrooms; the chairs and desks were organized in rows. Mohammed was working with a curriculum being phased out. Unfortunately, while this contained some practice speaking activities, these lacked communicative purpose, and there was very little pair work and no group work. Nearby, in newer schools, learners were benefiting from a more learner-centred curriculum. Unfortunately, the changes had not reached Mohammed's school yet.

Nevertheless, Mohammed had fresh ideas, as was evident when I came to see him teach. My role on the BA TESOL included visiting the schools of the 35 teachers in my regional group. I observed them each once a semester, lessons that were not assessed. Feedback sessions were learning opportunities, to stimulate reflection and so encourage teachers to relate their classroom practices to theory.

this article will encourage ELT researchers to seriously consider using it.

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For this observed lesson, Mohammed had adapted the curriculum materials to create an information gap, which was central to his communicative task, structured like Cameron's (2001) with a preparation activity and a follow-up either side of a communicative 'core'. This 'core' activity involved milling, with the Grade 6 learners (in their third year of learning English), equipped with either a picture or text, needing to find a partner on the other side of the room who had a match. Despite the constraints imposed by the classroom, the activity appeared to work well, although some used L1 rather than English. This lesson provided interesting evidence, I later told Mohammed, that milling activities can succeed if well set up, even with 45 students in a narrow classroom!

In the post-lesson discussion, we talked initially about the 'core' activity; Mohammed explained how it fulfilled various criteria. We then analysed the demands it made on learners, and discussed how support had been provided through preparation activities and classroom management strategies. Mohammed then reflected on the extent to which the task had stimulated learning and on his thinking processes in designing the lesson.

Mohammed was engaging, then, in reflective practice, which involves observing while teaching, reflecting, theorizing and planning (Ur, 1996). This differs from teacher research, if the latter is "systematic, rigorous enquiry by teachers into their own professional contexts, and which is made public" (Borg, 2009a: 377). However, there is clearly a degree of overlap, as amongst the qualities required of teacher researchers are reflective skills, such as noticing, listening, analysing, problem-solving, hypothesizing and evaluating outcomes against objectives (Malderez & Bodóczy, 1999). If teachers can develop these reflective skills, supported by a constructivist approach to teacher education, i.e. one focused on context-specific needs (Mann, 2005), then they are also being equipped to carry out research.

Reflecting on how Omani teachers developed into action researchers through the BA TESOL, Al-Sinani, Al-Senaidi and Etherton (2009) highlight first the encouragement of reflective skills that led into small-scale classroom research. The practical assignments of a range of taught methodology modules required these teachers to observe their learners, analyse learning/teaching materials used in their schools, adapt materials (e.g. to make them more communicative), trial them and then evaluate these innovations. Indeed, some of these skills were built into the very first methodology module and all were practised in the first year of the programme (Wyatt, 2009, 2011). Subsequently, in Year Two, the teachers received more formal input, on topics including action research, through a module on Researching TESOL, which thus helped consolidate their growing practical knowledge as researchers. They then developed dissertations in their final year. Additional support was provided by mentoring in schools

at a time of curriculum renewal when there was also greater encouragement amongst school supervisors of reflective practice (Wyatt & Arnold, 2012). Thus conditions were favourable for growth. As Mann (2005: 106) argues, discussing models of teacher education: "Where a teacher is able to stay in their teaching context, enriched by reading, reflective teaching and action research, the experience usually leads to sustained development".

What, then, were the outcomes in terms of action research on this BA TESOL? 60 of the best of the approximately 900 dissertations produced by teachers on the ten-year project were selected by Borg (the UK-based academic director), edited and then published in three volumes (2006, 2008, 2009b), all available online through the Omani Ministry of Education portal. Many of these dissertations, particularly in the latter half of the project, were 'action research', i.e. they involved the teachers in systematically evaluating learning, planning interventions and carrying these out, observing, reflecting, analysing the results of their interventions, theorizing and perhaps then initiating fresh cycles before writing up the research (Burns, 1999).

One of these dissertations was Mohammed's, submitted 27 months after the observation and post-lesson discussion described above. His action research (Al-Marzooqi, 2008) focused on promoting oral interaction in English through group work, a mode of interaction novel in his context. Therefore, he needed to design group work activities and manage them in a way that maximized benefits (e.g. increased opportunities for talk, support for learner autonomy) and minimized drawbacks (e.g. "noise, domination by individual learners, confusion caused by learners' unfamiliarity with group work, and excessive use of the L1") (ibid.: 44). He kept a research diary and also asked a fellow teacher, equipped with a specially-designed observation tool, to focus watchfully on a particular group in a sequence of lessons. The research design featured action cycles, with modifications (e.g. reductions in group size and the provision of greater support for cooperative learning) made on the basis of observations and reflections. After several cycles, positive learning outcomes were noted, in terms of improved learner strategies and motivated English language use. Al-Marzooqi felt that engaging in such small-scale classroom research was very beneficial for teachers trying to gain a greater understanding of how to support learning.

The issues Al-Marzooqi (2008) was dealing with also preoccupied other action researchers in this rapidly changing educational context. Some teachers, for example, working with the new curriculum in modern schools, were adjusting to group work for the first time and seeking to use it more effectively (e.g. Al-Maqbali, 2008), while a teacher in Wyatt (2010b) was focused on using group work to support low achievers. Others concentrated on developing speaking skills. Al-Farsi

(2008), for example, still working with the older curriculum, designed communicative speaking tasks and then observed and audio-recorded groups engaged in these, providing evidence of authentic motivated speech. Developing young learners' abilities to use communication strategies through input followed by oral game-like practice was the thrust of Al-Senaidi's (2009) research. Other skills received attention too. Maryam Al-Jardani (2008) focused on developing process writing, while Al-Sheedi (2008) developed an extensive reading programme.

Another theme running through this body of research is self-assessment, an innovative feature of the new curriculum. Khalid Al-Jardani (2006), for example, observed Grade 5 learners assessing themselves, held conferences with them to clear up misconceptions, and monitored their progress, comparing their self-assessments with his own judgements. Over time, he found the majority became more accurate. Adopting a similar approach with her Grade 4 learners, Al-Sinani (2008) adapted and re-introduced a self-assessment task her learners struggled with. She interviewed learners and engaged in awareness raising, reporting, after several action cycles, a better degree of fit between her judgements and learners' self-assessments. Al-Asalam's (2009) intervention in an older school not yet following the new curriculum involved introducing self-assessment activities and analysing how these helped.

In short, there is evidence of teachers engaging deeply in action research to fulfil goals that seemed highly relevant to their teaching contexts in a way that seems intrinsically motivated. While some of their colleagues would have perhaps been more 'instrumentally motivated' (Borg, 2013), less interested in the process and possibly opting for research designs that minimized reflection on teaching/learning, those benefiting from action research included teachers conscious of personal growth and the rewarding experience of helping others (Al-Marzooqi, 2008; Wyatt, 2010a). Furthermore, there was self-awareness of how the 'constructivist' nature of the programme (Mann, 2005) was helping them develop as researchers (Al-Sinani, Al-Senaidi & Etherton, 2009). This all suggests that if, in formal teacher education, context-specific support is tailored to needs, if conditions are favourable and if teachers are intrinsically-motivated, growth identifiable through qualitative research methods (e.g. as in Wyatt, 2010a) can occur, in terms of both deeper practical understandings of research and more carefully-nuanced classroom practice.

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Experience with an Online Questionnaire

Tsu-hsuan She

This article describes my experience of using an online questionnaire to survey the successes and failures experienced by 60 advanced L2 novel readers. As a novice researcher, I had little experience of designing and implementing questionnaires, but I found that easily available on-line instruments, such as the one I describe below, can provide the inexperienced writer with a supportive, effective and principled research tool.

Aims of the Research

My MA dissertation research was a response to Krashen's claim that 'compelling input', especially from sustained pleasure reading, is the best source of language learning data (Krashen, 2011). I wanted to find out if such a thing as the 'compelling' L2 novel actually exists. Hypothesising from personal experience and anecdote, I suspected that L2 readers often approach novels in English with initial enthusiasm, but often give up on their reading with a sense of frustration, or even failure, hence the title of my dissertation *Great Expectations and Hard Times: how L2 learners select, respond to and give up on reading novels*. I thought it would be worthwhile to find out if L2 readers had actually experienced the 'compelling' novel, and, if so, to try to characterise its qualities; it would also be interesting to see what factors had caused readers to abandon a novel. With these research aims in mind, I decided to undertake a survey of advanced L2 readers in my context, Taiwan.

Collecting data online

I chose to use a free on-line survey instrument offered by the company 'Survey Monkey'. The name does not sound very serious or academic, but in fact, I found the tool very efficient and successful to use for reasons I shall explain below. Obviously, electronic surveys are less expensive to administer than postal questionnaires; they can be distributed worldwide, and are likely to be returned faster. My experience accords with Bryman's comment that online questionnaires 'are completed with fewer unanswered questions than postal questionnaires'. In addition, open questions are 'more likely to be answered online and to result in more detailed replies' (Bryman, 2012: 677).

My research seemed to support Bryman's claim and I believe that I received a higher return rate (60+ responses) than would have been possible with more traditional methods of delivery. It's probably true to say that the vast majority of tertiary educated second language speakers among my contemporaries (my main

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Table 1. Survey invitation.



target group and respondents) have access to the Internet and positively prefer composing and communicating online, particularly via a social media platform, Facebook, which was the host site for my survey. The invitation to participate is showed in Table 1.

Using Survey Monkey

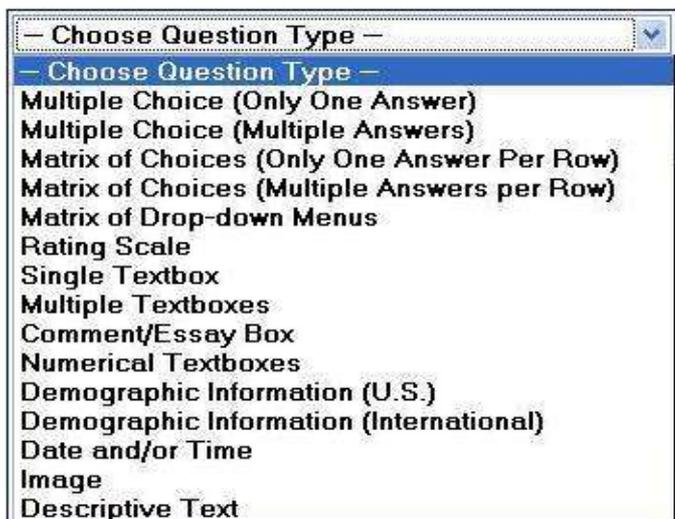
Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>) is a commercial research tool. I found it to be an efficient and even enjoyable way to create a survey and to provide fast and flexible responses. Moreover, the basic version is free! From my perspective, the main positive points about 'Survey Monkey' are as follows:

- It can be uploaded onto social media platforms such as Facebook, thus making it widely accessible to friends and 'friends of friends'. Essentially, respondents are self-selecting. It might be objected that this wide availability makes the target group rather scattered and non-homogeneous. I do not believe this to be the case because, for example, in my situation, the huge majority of respondents were my contemporaries: tertiary educated and advanced level readers of English.
- Crucially, those who chose to answer my on-line Survey Monkey questionnaire did so of their own free will and out of genuine interest. Whilst I did specifically urge some acquaintances to complete the survey, the majority filled it in because it relates to their own experience and concerns. When I was discussing 'Survey Monkey' with a colleague from Taiwan, she commented that: "People in Taiwan don't take internet surveys seriously". I believe my results disprove that idea and even show that an attractively designed survey delivered through a social media platform obtains a better and more engaged response than the traditional 'pen and

paper' form filled in under pressure from the researcher.

- The free version of Survey Monkey allows the writer to ask 10 questions. This might be seen as a limitation, but in fact I think that the discipline of having a relatively small number of questions encourages the designer to think very carefully about phrasing the questions. As I hope can be seen from my results, a significant amount of data can be generated from just 10 questions.
- Moreover, the small number of questions doesn't exhaust the respondents' patience. I believe that the short and concise nature of the questionnaire plus the limited field size of the comment boxes encouraged respondents to complete it with goodwill and counteracted Bryman's (2012: 247) complaint that open ended questions "require greater effort from respondents in that they will "need to write for much longer" and may deter possible respondents from answering the questionnaire.
- As Bryman (2012) suggests, on-line instruments (such as Survey Monkey) do seem to provide high levels of return and completion. The tool provides an attractive and efficient layout for the survey, with easily manageable click boxes and appropriately sized field boxes for open-ended answers.
- There are many different types of survey questions available in Survey Monkey, which can help the inexperienced designer to try out various question types (see: Table 2).
- The user receives real time results and 24hr access. Individual responses and aggregate data can be reviewed immediately.

Table 2. Types of questions offered by Survey Monkey.



(Survey software reviews: Choosing the right survey tool. (March 26, 2009). Surveymonkey.com Review. Retrieved on Feb. 20, 2010 from <http://www.survey-reviews.net/index.php/2009/03/surveymonkeycom-review/>).

All in all, I was very satisfied with my choice of delivery mode. Survey Monkey provides a user-friendly framework of question types and presentation formats. This is very helpful for the beginner researcher who can experiment with different survey designs, question sequences and question types during the planning and piloting stages.

Ethical issues

A possible ethical issue involving online surveys, especially true for questionnaires sent via email, is that they might be difficult to keep anonymous since the respondent has to “return the questionnaire either embedded within the message or as an attachment” to the researcher (Bryman, 2012: 677). However, one of the benefits of the Survey Monkey instrument is that the questionnaire is returned anonymously and untraceably to the central website. Thus the nature of the research instrument ensures that privacy and confidentiality are respected. Moreover, unlike some situations where respondents are more or less required to answer questionnaires under pressure from the researcher or his/her colleagues, the way in which the survey was presented ensured that respondents actively opted to complete the questionnaire of their own free will. I believe that the quality and reliability of the results are enhanced by this.

Results of my Survey

On the basis of the useful data received from the survey instrument, I found that the ‘compelling novel’ tends to fall into typical categories according to genre, accessibility of language, stylistic features and links with films. Strong generic features such as those found in the detective, spy or romance novel encouraged readers to engage successfully with a text. Readability levels also

contributed to the compelling nature of the book; the more favoured texts tended to rate at the ‘easier’ end of the scale. As with the L1 ‘blockbuster’, the compelling novel tended to have a strong narrative drive, a limited number of characters and a ‘cliff-hanger’ structure. The existence of an associated film was also a factor associated with successful engagement with a novel. One of the other interesting findings was the way in which several of the more prolific and engaged readers had actually given up on novels on many occasions. It appeared that those who could regard abandoning a novel as a learning experience rather than a failure had continued to develop their ability to choose novels and develop a taste of books which were ‘right for them’.

When I planned my survey, I had little idea of how enthusiastically my subjects would respond to the on-line survey or how much data can be generated from a mere 10 questions. When surveys are available to an open audience on line, only interested people will take part. This element of self-selection needs to be considered in relation to the nature of the research, but in my survey of L2 readers’ experiences with the novel, I found that the on-line questionnaire can be used to elicit engaged responses and rich data.

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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 comes from Katherine Levy, a Research SIG member, who was inspired by Yasmin Dar's report on exploratory practice (ELT Research Issue 26) to submit her own piece. She conducted the research she reports on here in her own classroom as part of her Masters Degree in Applied Linguistics at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

Verbal Praise in the Classroom: An Exploratory Research Study

Katherine Levy (Monash University)

Introduction

My own teacher education has been seasoned with rhetoric regarding the importance of praise in the classroom. During teaching practicum, I consistently received feedback that praised me for my positive encouragement and reinforcement. Indeed, much research has demonstrated that praise is an important element of a successful classroom. Harmer (2007) stated that praise is an essential tool of assessment in the language classroom and that positive praise is a sign of positive assessment for students. Positive praise has been defined as reinforcement of good behaviours and contributions (ibid) while still remaining general in nature. Another definition includes the concept of a 'positive evaluation' of one's actions, work or behaviours (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). In contrast, negative interactions have been described as 'criticism' including behaviour correction or punishment (Burnett, 1999). Positive praise leads students to perceive a more positive student-teacher relationship while the contrary is true for negative interactions (Burnett, 2002). However, Scrivener has recently questioned what he describes as 'empty praise' or 'overpraising' and has suggested that continual praise, as opposed to feedback, actually hinders the learning process (Scrivener, 2012).

At this point, it is necessary to make a brief distinction between praise and feedback. Praise is positive language that is a response to student behaviour in general, usually expressing admiration or approval

(Burnett, 2002). In contrast, feedback is corrective in nature and more explicitly related to students' ability to understand (Ellis, 2008). Scrivener (2012) posits that feedback is more desirable and effective than praise. The focus of this exploratory study will be praise as opposed to feedback in the classroom.

It was Scrivener's (ibid.) suggestion that made me question my own use of praise and its perceived effectiveness. I suspected that I was over-praising, leading to a diminished value of my praise and a lack of effectiveness for my students. My students seemed to be responding less to my verbal praise and it didn't seem to have the same effect on them as it used to. This was in spite of an increased energy and enthusiasm in my teaching during recent months.

I was inspired by the recently expanded body of research regarding exploratory research in the classroom (Dar, 2012) and decided to conduct my own exploratory research in my own classroom. This research was markedly different from the research I had conducted during my Master's degree so far, and I found exploratory research to be challenging yet extremely useful for my own classroom practice.

Puzzle Area: Why don't my students appear to respond to verbal praise in the classroom? It seems to have very little impact on their self-confidence and ability.

Hypothesis

I suspected that the reason for my students' lack of response was the amount of praising that I did in the classroom. I also suspected that I was unaware of exactly how often I actually praised, and that my praise utterances, or positive praise words, might be far more in number than I thought.

Before conducting my research, I self-administered a questionnaire in order to understand how I perceived my teaching practice. The questionnaire contained five short, simple, close-ended questions, to ensure that the data collection was clear and directly related to my puzzle area (Bourque, 2004). The questionnaire revealed that I believed the following about my praise:

- 1) I utter praise words approximately 5-10 times in a 50minute lesson.
- 2) 'Good', 'brilliant', 'yep', 'yes', 'okay', and 'excellent' were the words I utter most often.
- 3) I believe 'Brilliant', 'excellent' and 'good' are the words my students respond to the most positively.

Context

The class in which I investigated this puzzle was an IELTS examination preparation class at a private, English language school in Wimbledon, UK. The class was composed of eight students (3 males and 5

females) aged between 18-44 years. The nationalities represented were Brazilian, Japanese, Spanish, German, Chinese, Polish and Iranian. Their English language level ranged from 5.5-7 IELTS equivalent. All the students were current UK residents in some form of English-speaking paid employment.

Method

I voice recorded a 50-minute lesson using the voice recorder application on an HTC Incredible smart phone. My students gave their permission for the lesson to be recorded (they were told care would be taken to anonymise their contributions) and were made aware that nothing else would be different regarding the lesson. The lesson was transcribed with student responses being recorded as SR and all praise words were highlighted in the transcript then totals for each word were calculated.

Results

1. Quantity of Praise Utterance

During the 50-minute time period, 87 praise utterances were recorded. At 1.74 praise words per minute, this result was 8.7 times more than the preconception I had voiced in my responses to the pre-recording questionnaire (see Table 1).

Table 1.

	Predicted	Actual
Praise utterances per 50 minutes	5-10	87
Praise utterances per minute	0.1-0.2/min	1.74/min

Table 2.

Word	Utterances
good	32
very good	13
yep/yes/yeah	13
well done	8
perfect	5
exactly	3
fine	3
great	2
excellent	2
correct	2
nice work	1
cool	1
mhmmmm	1
uhuh	1

2. Praise Word Choice

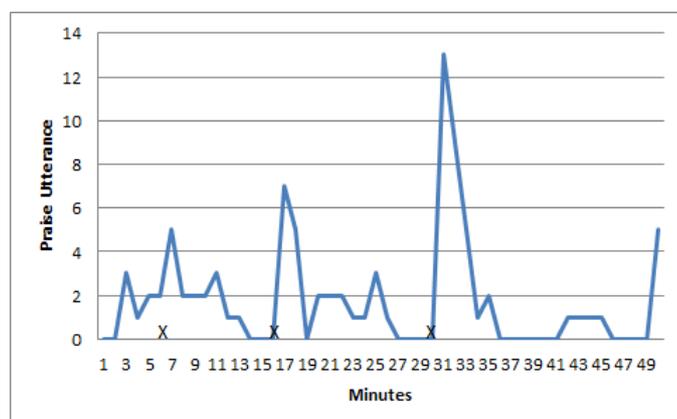
While I had perceived that 'good' was a word I used often in my praise, I was unaware of how often I said this

word in a lesson. In fact, I said the word 32 times in a 50 minute lesson, more than once every two minutes. Also, while my pre-recording questionnaire stated that I thought I said 'brilliant' and 'okay', I actually never used those words in the lesson. Instead, I used 'good' and 'very good' the majority of the time, with 'yes/yeah/yep' and 'well done' used 13 and 8 times respectively (see Table 2).

3. Dispersal of Praise

The praise was not consistently spread throughout the time, and there were clear clusters of praise directly following or during task feedback from students. The 'highs' in Table 3 correspond to such points. During these parts of the lesson, the students were giving their answers to the questions they had just completed. The praise during this task feedback is very much higher than anywhere else in the lesson.

Table 3.



Conclusion

My original analysis of my own assumptions showed that I was unaware of how often I actually praise my students. In fact, I praise my students over ten times more than I originally thought, and this was consistent throughout the lesson. The choice of praise words was also markedly different from what I had originally perceived and it was interesting to note that my use of the word 'good' or the variation 'very good' were much more frequent than any other word. There was also a frequent use of the words 'yes, yep or yeah', especially during student task feedback, which was not predicted in my pre-recording survey.

The dispersal of praise is also significant, as there was a marked increase in praise during student task feedback. In one case, after several minutes of no praise, thirteen praise words were uttered within the space of one minute. The words were also clustered together, as in this example from the transcript:

T: 'Yes. Okay, great. Yep, fine. Next?

S: My clothes machine (sic: washing machine) has been fixed by the man.

T: 'Great (student name)! You are getting there. Great work.'

It is clear that Scrivener's description of 'overpraising' could be applied here. He speaks of constant praise 'washing over' students and never really sticking or having the effect that the teacher intended. The clustered nature of my praise shows that my words are not praising a student response directly, with clear positive feedback, but rather simply uttering as many praise words as possible in a short space of time.

While I am clearly praising answers from students, as the clustering shows, the amount of words could be creating a lack of clarity for my students. Part of the reason behind this could be my desire to create a positive environment for my students, and allow them to have a 'safe' place to express their answers. However, students may value explicit feedback relating directly to a given response (Ellis, 2008) and it is possible that this 'general' praise lacks the specificity that is valued by students.

In creating this exploratory research study, I aimed to discover why my students did not respond to my praise as readily and enthusiastically as I would like. While my assumption was correct in that I do praise my students much more than anticipated, my study did not show whether this amount of praise had a negative effect on the students. In conducting this study, I gathered some very valuable data relating to my classroom practice and much of what I discovered does shed some light on the nature of my teaching methods. However, I cannot link this classroom practice to my student's response to praise based only on the data from this study.

To establish whether my use of general praise has led to my students' behavioural response (i.e. apparently becoming less responsive to praise), I would need to do more research, specifically relating to my choice of praise words. I suspect that my students do not respond to the word 'good' due to its overuse and it would be interesting to establish whether this is true. I would also like to ascertain which words my students respond most positively to, as this would help me to further develop my teaching practice and establish the explicit feedback that my students probably need.

This exploratory research was incredibly valuable and helpful to my teaching practice and I would encourage other teachers to research their own teaching puzzles to ensure that we are teaching to the best of our knowledge and ability.

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Supporting teacher-research: the work of Kenan Dikilitaş and teachers at Gediz University, Izmir¹

Richard Smith

I first met Kenan Dikilitaş at an IATEFL Teacher Training and Education SIG symposium on 'Researching Teachers' in February 2012 in Istanbul, Turkey. In my own talk I had been arguing that teacher-research is valuable and viable as a means for in-service professional development, despite the difficulties involved, and I had suggested some ways practising teachers can be supported to engage with and in research. Kenan came up to me afterwards in a state of some excitement and talked to me about the approach he'd been adopting as professional development coordinator in the English Preparatory School at Gediz University in Izmir. Rather than providing conventional kinds of top-down teacher training input, which - we both agreed - can tend to deny teachers' autonomy, he had been encouraging his teachers to reflect on issues in their classrooms, read published research and do action research projects, thereby taking more control over their own development. This was the second year of the experiment, he explained, and the first time he'd really come across any external validation for his approach. Would I be interested in visiting Gediz when I next came to Turkey and seeing for myself what he was doing?

I certainly was interested, as this kind of attempt to incorporate teacher-research within a teacher development programme is still relatively rare, and, I thought, absolutely worth supporting. I was in Izmir in April 2012 and went to talk to Kenan then, to learn more about how he had come to adopt this innovative approach to professional development (my recording of our conversation forms the basis for most of my report here). I also sat in on a presentation by one of the teachers (they all meet together every week for 40 minutes, and Kenan combines this with one-to-one meetings during the rest of the week).

According to Kenan, the idea of promoting engagement with and in research as the main teacher development activity at Gediz came from his own overall learning experience, and from a resulting belief that people should discover relevant knowledge for themselves

rather than expect to be 'fed' with it. In linguistics courses he had taken at university he was struck by the notion that 'children construct their own grammar' - reaffirming his emerging belief that we all construct our own knowledge. He had heard of action research and was attracted to it as it seemed consistent with this underlying philosophy, but he hadn't, he admitted, known a lot about it when he first proposed it as the approach to professional development he would like to engage in when he first started working at Gediz.

In his first sessions (in September 2010) with the 40-45 teachers he was responsible for, he talked to them about his beliefs about teacher-learning, saying he would not be prescribing to them how to teach but instead wanted them to engage in discussions. The initial reaction, as he recalls, was one of surprise that he would not be providing a more top-down form of training. Some reacted negatively, questioning this way of proceeding and referring to the way their friends teaching on preparatory programmes elsewhere were being trained.

But Kenan didn't give up. He continued with some discussions of advantages and disadvantages of teacher-research, stressing the value of collecting data to gain insights into your own classroom, and giving examples from books by Anne Burns and Michael Wallace. He had to struggle, though, due to some teachers' continuing perceptions that teacher training should be more fun and entertaining, based on their previous experience of CELTA-style sessions. Kenan told the teachers: "You don't have to do research. All you have to do is come to professional development sessions once a week and present at some point on something - this could just be a summary of something you've read and your opinions about it." He also led a session on determining an interest area or topic, stressing that this should be something the teacher doesn't know about, related to their own teaching. He asked participants to list three problematic areas in their own teaching. Then he invited them to come to see him in his office, to share their topics.

Teachers at Gediz, as in preparatory programmes at most universities in Turkey, have little free time, so they tended to come to see Kenan during breaks, either just dropping in or making an appointment in advance. He never attempted to change a teacher's selected topics. Kenan and the teacher would search for relevant articles together on the Internet and he would print the articles out for them. When a teacher seemed ready, Kenan would ask them to present at the weekly session about what they had found from their reading and/or to present a proposal for collecting data about their topic. A favoured kind of presentation in the early stages was reading articles on a topic and expressing an opinion about them, for example about how video materials can be used in the classroom. Gradually, also, Kenan began to give all teachers some basic research methods

¹ This piece is adapted from the Foreword to Dikilitaş, K. (ed.). (2013).

training about questionnaires, interviews and observations.

One by one, then, the teachers started to present, on Tuesdays at 4pm, for about 40 minutes. Kenan might comment on the teacher's powerpoints in advance, showing them how to make the slides more concise (since there was a tendency to include much too much at first) – but he was careful never to comment negatively about a teachers' presentation or research proposal – this would have discouraged the teachers, who were just 'finding their way'.

Indeed, an informal atmosphere was encouraged. For some of the teachers, however, even coming once a week was a burden – time was a major constraining factor, even then.

Given the difficult beginning that he described to me, it is a somewhat amazing fact – and a testament to the increasing commitment and hard work of all the teachers, and of Kenan himself – that little over one year after the beginning of the experiment, in November 2011, a book of 22 reports of action research as well as critical reviews of literature by Gediz teachers was brought out by the Ankara-based publisher Nobel. Titled *Teacher-research Studies at Foreign Language School: Inquiries from Teacher Perspectives* and edited by Kenan Dikilitaş himself for the Gediz University Academic and Professional Development Office, this book arose from the first, relatively small-scale Gediz Action Research Conference, spread over two days (June 17th and July 1st 2011), which was arranged just for teachers from within the institution. A very impressive total of 27 teachers presented on their teacher-research and almost all of them wrote up their presentations in the form of written reports for the 2011 book. As Kenan remarks, some of the teachers have been so empowered by the experience of presenting and writing that they are now looking to get work published in journals, and several of them have presented on their work at other conferences. Most of the teachers now seem to see the value of doing research – if only to add to their CV by getting a paper published or presenting at a conference. In addition to this, however, Kenan perceives that many have developed an intrinsic interest and a shift in identity – from being 'just instructors' they now see themselves as researchers.

Some aspects of the Gediz approach to teacher-research as this has developed are, I think, worth drawing out of the above account for their possible relevance elsewhere. Firstly, Kenan was quite thick-skinned in pushing ahead to realize his vision despite initial resistance, and such forcefulness might indeed be necessary in other contexts when existing expectations are for a more conventional 'pre-packaged', 'commodified' version of teacher training, as might be the case in Turkish university preparatory programmes generally. Secondly, it was noticeable from my interview

with him that Kenan saw value in not judging or commenting too much on teachers' own ideas and plans, preferring to put the emphasis on teachers' finding their way for themselves. The issue of degree of guidance and degree of freedom to 'allow' to teachers (relating also to the issue of how much guidance to give *before* teachers begin their research, and how much can be given 'at the point of need') is an important one for all mentors of practitioner research to consider, and is probably resolvable only with reference to needs in a particular context. Kenan's own approach involved making himself available for consultation at times convenient for teachers (even via mobile phone when necessary), and his ongoing presence as mentor on the spot, *in* the institution, must have been one of the major factors in the success of the project, given that teachers' busyness is so frequently cited as a barrier to teacher-research, in any context. Another key to the developing success of this project may have been the way not too much pressure was put on teachers to be 'perfect' or to fit conventional academic standards of research. Again, considerable tolerance has been shown towards teachers finding their own way.

Talking with Kenan in April 2012 was enlightening indeed, and I had a chance to witness his and Gediz teachers' achievement further for myself when I attended their second Action Research Conference in July 2012, as one of the keynote speakers. This time there were teachers visiting from some other Izmir institutions, and the conference was altogether larger in scale. Teachers gave confident presentations of their research, and most of them have written up their talks for presentation in a second impressive volume of reports of teacher-research, which came out earlier this year (Dikilitaş 2013).

By summer 2012 I think I had become a kind of critical friend to Kenan (mentors, after all, can benefit from mentoring themselves from time to time!), and a few weeks after the conference he and I talked some more, this time in relation to how he/we might research his teacher development practice more systematically. My contribution to this, as a kind of baseline or starting-point for work in the third year (2012-13) was to volunteer to elicit teachers' evaluations of the two years that had gone by, evaluations which they could perhaps share with me as an outsider in a way they would not necessarily be able to share so freely with Kenan. My thematic analysis of respondents' perceptions revealed the following disadvantages of action research in this context (each matched against a representative quotation):

- 1) Workload / lack of time ("Most of us are busy teachers. Sometimes we can have heavy teaching load. Action research requires time, attention, and investigation. For a reasonable research, you have to focus deeply on your study. As a result, the teaching

load and the research could be quite tiring at the same time for teachers.”)

2) Need for more preparation or other ‘support’ / concerns about quality (“After this year’s presentations, I realized that the results were somehow forced. I really wouldn’t want to say that but some of them were perfunctory. My belief in the academic value of making an AR project was damaged.”)

3) Modular system / inappropriateness of classes (“The change of the classes that the modular system required. It means that you initiate the study with the identified classes but you have little chance to continue with the same students or the same module.”)

4) Compulsory nature (‘I believe it shouldn’t be compulsory’) – mentioned by one respondent

As this shows, difficulties and criticisms persist, indeed they will probably never go away, even if ways can be thought of to address some of them. Overall, however, the written comments I received were extremely positive, and I shall end with my thematic analysis of the advantages of action research as perceived by Gediz teachers engaged in it at the end of the second year of innovative teacher-research. Again, a representative quotation is provided for each emerging theme:

* Action research links theory and practice (‘Theory and practice were in the same direction throughout the study’)

* Improvement in teaching abilities (“It was helpful for me to improve myself. It helped me to detect problems in the classroom.”)

* Increase in self-reliance (“Action research allows us to address a problem which needs to be solved. I’m now more competent at investigating and finding solutions to the problems that I have found out.”)

* Increase in self-awareness (“[I was] forced to look critically at myself as a teacher and really explor[e] how I can improve. So it helped me see myself more clearly.”)

* It provides new perspectives (“Action research [...] lets us have a more detailed perspective on learners and you become more aware of your students’ needs and learning styles.”)

* It gives a sense of development / is a source of motivation (“The AR program could enable me to see the improvement I could reach in my profession.”)

* It Increases student self-awareness / confidence in teachers (“The students were more aware of [...] what they were learning and they could rely more on the teachers and the institution due to [this].”)

* it increases ability to research / develops identity as a researcher (“Apart from identifying problems, I have learnt how to gather and evaluate the data.”)

Ever since we first met almost two years ago, Kenan has been very open to hearing advice and receiving critical comment from me, and I have gained much from becoming more involved, as a kind of insider-outsider. It seems to me that the Gediz experiment is going from strength to strength, gathering momentum each year, and I have been very grateful for the opportunity to watch it develop, to become more involved through talking with teachers as well as with Kenan, and to help it along where I can.

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Research SIG Day Papers at IATEFL 2013 (Liverpool)

For 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. Two groups of presenters from the Research SIG Day in Liverpool 2013 have submitted written forms of their papers: group 1) James Simpson, Richard Badger, Kathrin Kaufhold Caroline Dyer, Atanu Bhattacharya and Sunil Shah; and 2) Sara Hannam and Radmila Popovic.

Mobigam: Language on the Move in Gujarat

Leeds:

James Simpson, Richard Badger, Kathrin Kaufhold (all School of Education, University of Leeds), Caroline Dyer (POLIS, University of Leeds)

Gujarat:

Atanu Bhattacharya (Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, Gujarat), Sunil Shah (HM Patel Institute of English Training and Research, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat).

Background

The Mobigam project is an investigation into the use of mobile technologies and literacy in Gujarat carried out by a group of researchers from the University of Leeds, West Yorkshire, UK and Central University of Gujarat and HM Patel Institute, both Gujarat, India. The first year of the project has been funded by the British Academy under their International Partnership and Mobility Scheme.

Mobile technologies are changing societies. When Governments make mobile networks accessible, they enable participation in practices involving, for instance, phone calls, text (SMS) messaging, engagement with social network sites (SNS), and the internet. Although governments which put in place the infrastructure for mobile communication primarily invoke the benefits to economic growth, this is often also done with a nod to

social inclusion. Yet simple access to hardware or to infrastructural networks cannot of itself address inequality (Warschauer, 2004). What is under-explored, and what our research seeks to identify and examine, is the actual nature of people's interactions using mobile technology, their situated mobile digital literacy practices, and how these might contribute to enabling them to achieve social justice.

Gujarat is developing rapidly and, like many other contexts in emerging economies, is of particular interest to those investigating the impact of mobile technologies on social inclusion. It has a high rate of growth, 10% (2010/2011); 8.5% (2011/2012), is one of the most industrialised states in India and is a source of inward migration from other states in India. It is also multilingual at state and individual level. Gujarati is the official language, with about 5% of the population speaking a tribal dialect, a similar proportion speaking Hindi and sizeable minorities speaking other language such as Memoni and Urdu. Gujarati is typically written in Nagari script and several other Indian languages spoken in the state have their own scripts. Mobile phone usage is also high. There were 25 million phones in use in 2008 reaching 40 million in 2012. This means there are 85 mobile phones for every one hundred people.

Aims

Our aim in this paper is to describe the processes by which we are using the resources that the British Academy award has made available to develop a bid for a larger project under the same Mobigam umbrella exploring how literacy practices related to mobile technologies might challenge established patterns of inequality and exclusion in Gujarat. This reflects our construction of the name Mobigam, a composite of *mobile* and *gam*, a 'rural area' in Gujarati.

Activities

During the year of funding we have been carrying out three main activities:

1. establishing a research group in Leeds and in Gujarat
2. building research capacity in Gujarat which we will draw on in our future work
3. developing a bid for funding for a project investigating mobile technologies, digital literacy practices and social justice

The research group

The research group has expanded beyond the initial four, James Simpson, Richard Badger, Atanu Bhattacharya and Sunil Shah and now includes Caroline Dyer (POLIS, University of Leeds) and, until the end of July, Kathrin Kaufhold.

The Leeds members of the groups have been meeting on a monthly basis and discussions with the Gujarat-based members have been facilitated by synchronous and asynchronous computer mediated chat and face-to-face meeting when movements allow.

The group has published papers in *ELT Quarterly* (Simpson et al, 2013a) and *ELT Weekly* (Simpson et al, 2013b) and is in the process of writing an article paper for *The Hillary Place Papers* entitled “Mobile literacy practices in Gujarat: Developing the capacity to aspire.”

The team also presented papers at IATEFL, Liverpool and at the School of Education, University of Leeds.

The group has an on line presence with:

a blog	mobigam.wordpress.com
a Facebook account	facebook.com/mobigamgujarat
a Twitter feed	@mobigam1
a Google group	mobigam@googlegroups.com

The discussions within the research group and at the workshops and presentations that the group has been involved in have led to several significant changes in how we conceptualise the main research study. Originally, we had planned to look at the role of mobile technologies in English language education in rural and semi-rural India. However, though mobile technologies are widely used in Gujarat, they are not a major part of formal education. Secondly, Gujarat is both multilingual and multicultural and the repertoire of literacy practices available to different groups has an impact on levels of social inclusion. Thirdly, economic developments in Gujarat means that there is considerable migration both within the state and from outside and the migratory groups are potentially subject to inequalities. These last two understandings moved us to refocus the main project on the potential of mobile digital literacies to disturb and disrupt patterns of inequality amongst marginalised groups in the state.

Research Training

In January, James Simpson, Richard Badger, Atanu Bhattacharya and Sunil Shah ran research methods workshop in Vallabh Vidyanagar, Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. They were attended by researchers and language teachers interested in mobile technology. The workshops discussed the main project and then focused on some research instruments, which, as we had initially thought, could be relevant to the main study. We examined common instruments such as surveys, interviews and observations as well as more specific approaches such as mobile tracking which enable researchers to follow where particular users are when they use their mobile phones and data donation, a method often used to collect text messages.

In June, the same team ran research workshops in the English Department, Bhavnagar University, Bhavnagar, HM Patel Institute, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Tolani Commerce College, Adipur, Kutch, and Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari. These sessions were attended by teachers and researchers from a wide variety of disciplines. These workshops built on the January workshop so we asked the participants to critique the survey discussed below, to make suggestions and approaches to analysing text messages and also to evaluate and, where possible, provide extra information about possible case studies.

The workshops were an effective way of building research capacity and also provided the research group with useful feedback on our research instruments and provided suggestions for possible case studies. These suggestions were often very concrete and workshop participants helped arranged visits to case study sites described below.

The study of mobile technologies and social justice in Gujarat

The starting point for our study was this question:

How are mobile technologies implicated in current digital literacy and language practices across interconnected social and spatial dimensions in Gujarat?

In order to address this question, we draw on Appadurai’s (2004) notion of the capacity to aspire. Appadurai argues, that “poverty means a smaller number of aspirational nodes and a thinner, weaker sense of the pathways from concrete wants to intermediate contexts to general norms and back again (Appadurai, 2004: 71). An important aspect of addressing social injustice is supporting the development of the capacity of a particular culture or social group to aspire. This focus on the different levels of capacity to aspire within groups led us to design our research around a series of case studies.

Case studies

We are still in the process of identifying the case studies that we will investigate but we include details of six possible cases. We have visited the first three possible research sites.

1. Mobile pastoralists in Kutch

This group have been disadvantaged by the processes of globalisation. There is a reorganisation of the sense of well being among people in this group.

2. Diamond polishers in Navsari or Surat

These are highly skilled workers and many gain access to training and employment through established networks.

3. Embroidery factory workers in Surat

These are also skilled workers but a more heterogeneous workforce, with the manager from Saurashtra, the male workers from Bengal and Bihar, and the female workers from Surat itself.

4. Female university or college students in Bhavnagar

Bhavnagar is the local centre for education and many female students travel on a weekly or termly basis from rural areas to study here

5. Rural-urban migrants in Ahmedabad

The self-employed women's association (SEWA) could help us gain access to migrants from rural areas who have migrated to the city.

6. Construction workers from the eastern belt

Gangs of constructions workers from the east of Gujarat typically travel together to construction sites across Gujarat.

Research design

For each case we plan three levels of research activity:

- Macro-level survey work to establish the background patterns of mobile use in each case;
- Meso-level analyses of written mobile texts (SMS messages, SNS interaction) in combination with interviews about those texts and their production, to achieve an understanding of the networks with which people engage in their mobile interaction, and the linguistic repertoires which they deploy as they do so;
- Micro-level critical linguistic ethnographies involving in-depth study of mobile *literacy events*, occasions where 'a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes' (Heath, 1982: 50) and *practices*, mobile-mediated 'culturally-recognisable patterns for constructing texts' (Tusting et al, 2000: 213)

Data collection

We have piloted a macro-level survey on mobile phone use through personal contacts and workshop participants (see below). This was completed by seventy-five people, all of whom were either students (40) or teachers/lecturers (35). Fifty-three people said they were expert speakers of Gujarati, forty-nine of English, forty-one of Hindi and a range of other languages were also mentioned. Tables one and two provide information about the purposes for which mobiles phones are used and the languages used to achieve these purposes.

The next stages

Over the next few months, the research team will be drafting two bids to fund further work, one focused on

formal education, under the major research project scheme of the Indian University Grants Commission,

Table 1. Frequency of activities carried out on mobile phones (n=75; 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=every week; 4=every day; 5=several times a day).

Activity	Frequency
a. To make calls	4.56
b. To receive calls	4.57
c. To send text messages	4.53
d. To receive text messages	4.36
e. To store data or text files	3.09
f. To take pictures	3.01
g. To play games	2.13
h. To listen to music	3.13
i. To get news	2.64

Table 2. Language used to carry out activities on mobile phones (n=75. E=English; G=Gujarati; H=Hindi; O=other languages). Numbers may total more than 75 because some people use more than one language for a particular activity.

Activity	E	G	H	O
a. To make calls	57	41	27	13
b. To receive calls	60	43	30	15
c. To send text messages	75	18	12	3
d. To receive text messages	73	23	16	4
e. To store data or text files	63	10	4	1
f. To play games	46	2	1	1
g. To listen to music	49	19	42	8
h. To get news	57	17	11	15

and one focussing on the everyday uses of mobile technologies outside the classroom, targeted at the ESRC. The time spent on the current phase of the Mobigam project has provided us with a strong foundation for future work. The notion of capacity to aspire has provided us with a conceptual framework for understanding the literacies that surround mobile technologies. The workshops and discussions within the group have giving us insight into the research strategies that will be needed to investigate the use of mobile technologies and our current resources in this area. Finally, our visits to potential research sites have given us some idea of the extent to which, despite their relatively recent introduction, mobile technologies have been normalised and of the differences and similarities in the ways in which different groups make use of mobile technologies.

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Growing as Researchers: Insider/Outsider Perspectives at Work - The Case of Serbian Teaching and Learning

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Introduction

This paper emerged from a partnership between the two authors over the last seven years, which resulted in a presentation at the recent IATEFL Conference (2013) as part of the Research SIG track. The aim of the paper is to explore how research partnerships can work in practice and to use our specific and on-going relationship as an exemplar. To put this in context, Sara Hannam carried out her doctoral work from 2005-2011 and Radmila Popovic acted as a critical friend throughout the process. The thesis examined English teaching and learning in Serbia using critical educational ethnography as an approach and all the fieldwork was carried out in the country. Following the

completion of the doctorate, we have continued to collaborate and have spent time reflecting on the nature of our research partnership. Our inquiry takes the form of co-constructed reflective answers to questions we have jointly arrived at, answered individually and subsequently analysed in tandem. The exploration of the partnership is carried out in the spirit of an *egalitarian dialogue* and a shared theoretical commitment to a dialogic approach or the search for different perspectives in the creation of shared meaning (Freire, 1970).

The Context

We have also been using the notion of an insider/outsider to explore this relationship. Sara Hannam is from the UK and was living in Greece at the time of the field work in Serbia (and is now back in the UK), and Radmila Popovic is from Serbia and was based in Belgrade at the time of the research but is now living in the USA. According to Dwyer and Buckle (2009) the 'insider' possesses the benefit of acceptance from the community as well as a familiarity with the everyday details of the environment. The outsider may be seen as someone who cannot appreciate the lived experience of the location. On the other hand, an outsider may also be viewed as an ideal researcher who has distance and can observe and analyse objectively. Along the same line, being part of a community disadvantages insiders because their inherently subjective perspectives are likely to impact research results (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Sara chose critical ethnography as an approach in part to avoid repeating the essentialist assumptions seen in many of the readings of the Balkans as a region as this framework demanded a more complex understanding of the history and the people. Both authors are aware, however, that "biases and preconceived ideas, even among those who attempt to shed them, are almost unavoidable and this applies to outsiders as well as insiders" (Todorova, 1997). We will argue that a commitment to fully understanding a historically situated locality might therefore come from a partnership of insider-outsider. In terms of our research partnership, it has grown and developed into one that has enhanced both the student (Sara) and the critical friend (Radmila) as opposed to being one where the critical friend offers support and expertise with no expectation of a return. As a result of a shared understanding and belief in equitable education, the relationship has in fact served to "promote...the personal and professional development of both stakeholders" (Norton, 2011).

The overarching aim of the doctoral research was to investigate the changing status of the English language at the beginning of the 21st century in Serbia (as a post-war, post-conflict country with a government desire to ascend to the EU). The choice of Serbia resulted from a combination of factors. Sara was living in Greece at the time of the most recent intervention by

NATO in the Balkans (and the bombing of Serbia) and was therefore acutely aware of the distortion of truth from both the Greek media (obscuring details of Serbian army activities in Bosnia and Croatia and crimes against humanity) and the media in the UK which was overwhelmingly condemning of Serbia (and Serbs) and failed to acknowledge the number of displaced Serbs living in various areas of the Balkans as well as the action of the UK/US military forces in choosing to intervene. Sara wished to explore what role the educational community played in the above and to document evidence of resistance to the Milosevic regime as well as to better understand the environment in relation to language, identity, conflict, power, politics and education. The growing influence of English as a language used and taught was also of great interest given the multi-lingual past of former Yugoslavia, which has also changed fundamentally since the dissolution. Sara was committed to approaching the research using a critical framework, which started from an opposition to all violence and nationalism and a fundamental belief in the importance of educational communities in challenging prevailing beliefs on all sides of any conflict. One of the most significant doctoral findings was evidence of resistance and collectivity in those communities and the ways in which they sought to maintain the cross-border relationships that existed before the conflict began and to show their opposition to the regime which threatened their previously collaborative projects. Additionally attitudes towards the assumed suitability of English as the new 'lingua franca' were extensively documented.

Sara's first contact with Radmila was after seeing her present at IATEFL and hearing her talk about Serbian ELT. This was in a Global Issues SIG track presentation and the content of the talk demonstrated Radmila's commitment to a critical agenda but also an awareness of the representational 'baggage', which often accompanies readings of the Balkans (and Serbs). Radmila and Sara went for a coffee and got talking. When Sara first communicated her project plans, Radmila received them with a mixture of enthusiasm, apprehension and doubt. The selected research focus resonated with her both on the professional and personal level: she lived through the turbulent times of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and NATO intervention, teaching English at the University and actively resisting the regime. On the one hand, Radmila was excited that someone with critical theoretical leanings would venture into exploring ELT in Serbia. On the other hand, she was not completely convinced that this was a potentially fruitful area for a doctoral dissertation. The general historical framework - the-end-of-the-millennium conflict in the Balkans - was undoubtedly unusual. However, by that time it had been analysed from a myriad of perspectives in literally thousands of publications (e.g. "Death of Yugoslavia", "The Destruction of Yugoslavia", "Breakup of

Yugoslavia", "The Demise of Yugoslavia", "Yugoslavian Inferno", "Europe's Backyard War").

Sara's position, which represented a combination of a socio-historic understanding and insights into language teaching and learning, was certainly non-mainstream and of value, as well as offering the chance for multi-disciplinarity in action. Yet, at that time Radmila feared that the story of English language teaching in Serbia was not 'big' or 'important' enough to counterbalance the dominant public discourse. Most importantly, Radmila felt apprehensive about her own role in Sara's research. Having just completed her doctoral dissertation, she was willing to be Sara's source; at the same time, she was also aware of potential pitfalls that would be difficult to overcome. The role of the insider includes not only providing information to the outsider, it also involves filtering it.

From that point on Radmila helped Sara to gain access to the Serbian context and environment by introducing her to people who would be helpful in the research. She also became an advisor in the formation of key research questions.

In Sara's view, as a result of this relationship and the 'critical friend' role, her doctoral research was certainly more refined. A key example of how this worked in practice relates to the representation of local languages and their connection to one another. After having written the chapter which reflected on language learning and use in the former Yugoslavia, she sent the work to Radmila. In her comments Radmila highlighted that the understanding Sara had of the local context, and particularly the relationship between Serbian and Croatian and the language that was formally called Serbo-Croat were over simplified. Sara then revisited this section and realised that to do it justice she would need to read much more widely from a socio- and ethno-linguistic point of view. Due to time pressure Sara made a decision to leave this section out and to revisit it as an individual project post-doc. On more than one occasion she also checked the wording of a focus group question with Radmila to ascertain how 'easy' it would be to answer. One such example was a question she had formulated which asked participants for their awareness of the stereotypes of the Balkans that exist in European literature and imagination. Radmila helped Sara to reword this question in a way that made it more accessible and easy to answer as it is a complex concept that requires several stages of unravelling. At other times when interviewees expressed particular views Sara was able to ask for more background on what may have shaped those views, which was extremely useful and enabled a gradual refining of the questions to get more and more nuanced responses.

The critical dialoguing and engagement was empowering for Radmila in several ways. Overall, this experience significantly altered her perspective of the

insider's role in research: she was a supplier of information but at the same time an active instrument in the data collection. In order to minimize the impact of her own bias, Radmila focused on clarifying her perspectives on all issues before communicating them to Sara. Sara's questions and subsequent clarifications (e.g. "what I want to ask is...") made clear to Radmila when such efforts had failed. Also, they helped her realize that it is crucial not only to provide background information to 'outsiders' (in the digital age this is usually easy to obtain), but to situate it in a broader context. This included defining the boundaries of local cultural and social conventions in all spheres of life, particularly in the realm of education, as well as challenging one's own categories of understanding.

While Sara was assembling her data and finding more pieces of the Serbian ELT jigsaw puzzle, Radmila began to discern a different, more complex picture in this familiar landscape. By focusing her exploration on language users and their circumstances, Sara helped Radmila see more clearly "...[the] dichotomy between the acceptance of the system and the attempt to operate within its structures, and the development of an approach which questions those very structures and tries to change them" (Hannam, 2011: 310) which marked the professional lives of many English language teachers in Serbia. Radmila also realized how an 'outsider's' perspective can sharpen the insider's own vision, lead them to notice things they tend to overlook, learn to appreciate what they have achieved and explain better why they have failed. The outsider and insider working in tandem enables both partners to adjust their 'lenses' and capture micro stories that can contribute to the construction of meta narratives.

The final doctorate would have been written one way or another, but without a doubt the final work is much richer and multi-layered because of the partnership. The process of discussion and negotiation of 'truth' and meaning led to further questions and analysis, which would not have been there without this process. Also, engagement in active meaning making through dialogue, or narrative knowledging (Barkhuizen, 2011) potentially opens up a new direction for research practice which is grounded in a combination of local and global features. We hope that this reflection on our critical dialoguing and partnership makes visible the complex way in which critical educational ethnography is "a mutual relation of interaction and adaptation between ethnographers and the people they work with, a relationship that will change both" (Hymes 1980: 89, in Blommaert & Jie 2010: 12).

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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. First, Sarah Mercer and Miroslaw Pawlak report on the TESOL 2013 Conference in Dallas. In the second report, Steve Mann and Steve Walsh reflect on their own experiences as speakers at the Research SIG Pre-Conference workshop at the IATEFL 2013 Conference in Liverpool, and this is followed by an account from Nasy Inthisone Pfanner, who recounts her experience of attending their workshop as a Research SIG Scholarship Winner. Finally, the fourth report, by Sarah Mercer, relates to a two-day conference at the University of York, hosted by the IRIS project in September 2013.

IATEFL Research SIG at TESOL 2013

Sarah Mercer and Miroslaw Pawlak

Between 20-23 March, 2013, the authors were both fortunate enough to attend the international TESOL conference in Dallas thank to a British Council grant. Prof. Maggie Hawkins, who is outgoing president of the Research Standing Committee at TESOL, came to the IATEFL Conference in Liverpool in return. The idea behind the exchange is to promote cooperation between the two organisations and provide us with the opportunity to learn from each other and share ideas. In this short article, we want to outline some of our brief impressions from our experiences and raise some suggestions emerging from our discussions for the future development of the SIG. We hope to get your feedback, thoughts and input on this and would be delighted to correspond about these via email.

Whilst there are fundamental structural differences between the two organisations, which make direct comparison difficult, there are also many points of shared interest. Perhaps to set the scene, it is important to begin with a brief outline about the nature of the Research Standing Committee at TESOL and its role compared to the Research SIG. Whereas the SIG is relatively autonomous within IATEFL, the standing committee at TESOL does not have a budget of its own and is more of an integral part of the overall TESOL hierarchy. In terms of its role, it has more of an advisory position as an expert panel on all matters

related to research for the overall organisation. As with the SIG, its function is also to encourage and support research in the community, but it has a less direct role in bringing together interested members of the wider organisation for shared activities. In many ways, the SIG appears to have a closer role in working tightly with members and their shared interests, particularly in terms of providing events and scholarships, as well as an exclusive web presence and discourse space.

The TESOL conference itself is a truly enormous event. This year at TESOL there were over 6000 attendees and finding your way about is a challenge to say the least. Needless to say, you are never short of an interesting talk to attend. In total, there were five plenary sessions covering topics such as critical thinking skills, intercultural communication, professional development, social bias, and identity. There were also a vast number of talks, workshops, discussion panels, and poster sessions covering a diverse range of topics with something for everyone. Perhaps one of the most striking features of many of the talks was their overall strong practice-orientation and a generally less salient research presence. However, there were also several explicit slots allocated specifically for Research Standing Committee events, including a research fair, a lunchtime research community discussion, and a transnational research slot. On the whole, the content of a large number of the talks naturally tended to have a strong focus on American ESL teaching contexts and issues. As both authors work in European EFL contexts, it was a wonderful opportunity to broaden our perspectives on the English language teaching and learning worldwide community. It was also interesting for us to explore many of the materials designed and produced specifically for these contexts at the book exhibition and compare these to those with which we are more familiar. It soon became apparent that whilst American ESL and EFL share points of commonality, they also have unique characteristics and needs too.

Whilst at TESOL, we discussed with Sue Garton (the incoming President of the Research Standing Committee at TESOL) and in Liverpool with Maggie Hawkins (the outgoing President), ways in which we could learn from our respective sister organisation and possibilities for future cooperation. Firstly, we discussed our hope to explore more fully the potential of linking our online communities and resources to promote a shared discourse space and more interaction between both. We also considered to what extent it might be possible to offer a discussion panel entitled 'TESOL at IATEFL' and one in the US entitled 'IATEFL at TESOL' to raise the profile and relevance of each organisation's work for the other. At present, TESOL already has a similar cooperation with AAAL and holds what are known as special 'TESOL@AAAL' and 'AAAL@TESOL' sessions to encourage the interconnections between the two organisations.

Perhaps the SIG could also extend this idea by looking to develop links between IATEFL and BAAL in the UK. We were also impressed by TESOL's Research Standing Committee 'Distinguished Research Paper Award', which is presented to outstanding research published by a member in the previous year in any peer-reviewed journal and which features as a special talk at the annual conference – an idea that could be followed up within the SIG. We have also begun discussions about what options there might be for holding joint events in both the real and virtual worlds.

To conclude, we want to thank Richard Smith for encouraging us to take up this opportunity to further develop the SIG, to the British Council for supporting this exchange and to David Nunan for opening up pathways of communication. We hope that we can repay their investments by contributing towards enhancing the work of the SIG and facilitating more cooperation between the two organisations. In today's globalised world, organisations and individuals can achieve more by working together and sharing resources. Let's hope that the Research SIG and the TESOL Research Standing Committee can find more ways of interconnecting in the future.

ReSIG Pre-Conference Workshop: 'Researching Professional Talk', 8 April 2013, Liverpool

This section contains two reports. The first one (1) has been written by the presenters, Steve Walsh and Steve Mann, and the second one (2) has been submitted by Nasy Pfanner, who attended the workshop as the Research SIG scholarship winner.

(1) Facilitators' report

Steve Walsh (Newcastle University) and Steve Mann (University of Warwick)

In this workshop, we examined a range of approaches to collecting and using spoken data as a means of

improving professional practice. Our main aim was to help participants to become active reflective practitioners and researchers of their own contexts. The emphasis in the workshop was on data-led approaches to reflection. We were also interested in shifting the balance from reflection on professional practice as an individual and written process towards reflective tools and activities, which encourage dialogue and collaboration. Our main argument was that most professional activities (including teaching and teacher education) are accomplished through talk. By studying the ways in which we interact, we argued, we can gain closer insights into professional practices and professional development.

The ideas and arguments which form the background and substance to the workshop are due to be published in the journal *'Applied Linguistics Review'* (October 2013). In this article we provide a critical review of reflective practice (RP), drawing attention to particular problems with its representation, as well as proposing a more evidence-based and data-led approach (Mann and Walsh 2013). Our central argument in this journal paper is that RP has attained a status of orthodoxy without a corresponding data-led description of its value, processes and outcomes. We are concerned that RP is described in ways that are elusive, general, and vague and which may not be particularly helpful for practitioners. This is largely due to the lack of concrete, data-led and linguistic detail of RP in practice and to its institutional nature, lack of specificity, and reliance on written forms. It is also the case that, despite a small number of exceptions (e.g. Korthagen & Wubbels, 1995; Walsh, 2011), reflective practice is not operationalized in systematic ways.

In both the ALR paper and in the IATEFL workshop, we make the case for the need for data-led accounts of reflective practice across a range of contexts. Too many RP accounts rely on general summaries and so are neither critical, transparent, nor usable by other practitioners. A key aspect of developing a more critical approach is the need to move beyond rosy summaries of the outcomes of RP towards accounts of how RP gets done. Where possible, we need to share examples of 'reflection in action' so that its nature and value can be better understood. We propose that RP needs to be rebalanced, away from a reliance on written forms and paying much more attention to spoken, collaborative forms of reflection; in sum, we argue for a more dialogic, data-led and collaborative approach to reflective practice.

Participants in the workshop had an opportunity to use a range of tools, classroom data, introspection and dialogue as a means of gaining better understandings of their professional practices and making their teaching more enjoyable. By using actual data as empirical evidence and by focusing on the interactions which take place in any professional setting, we

suggested how we might create active, engaged learning environments. Tools and practices which were used in the workshop included stimulated recall, lesson recordings and transcripts, dialogue and focused questioning and the use of frameworks (such as SETT, Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk, Walsh, 2006) for analysing spoken interaction.

In the workshop and, indeed, in future research, our main concern is to make professional development more dialogic and evidence-based. We hope to achieve this by using a range of data taken from different teaching contexts and demonstrating how participants might research specific issues or puzzles in their own classes by using tools such as stimulated recall, self-evaluation checklists, peer review, lesson transcripts, 'snapshot' recordings, video interaction and guidance. Looking forward, we are especially interested in helping participants develop more dialogic approaches to their professional development by examining the value of talk as a means of generating new insights. By 'research' we mean systematic investigation which is evidence-based, which can be accomplished in the course of normal teaching practices and which may involve another professional. In this sense, we see research as being 'up-close', fine-grained and personal, designed to foster description and understanding and promote dialogue and discussion (van Lier, 2000).

Finally, we included in the session a presentation of the difference between researching professional talk and professional talk in research. This part of the session concentrated on developing a reflective approach to qualitative interview interaction. While the main focus of the workshop was researching professional talk (such as classroom discourse), examples of interview data were also used to show how sensitivity to the co-construction of talk enables a richer situated understanding of practice (Mann, 2011). A number of participants in the workshop have subsequently shared insights and examples of a reflective approach to qualitative interviewing. If any other readers are interested in following this up with us, please have a look at the following website:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/staff/teaching/mann/interviews/>

In the final part of the workshop, we proposed a range of research questions that need further attention, and engaged in a discussion of research opportunities that exist. Participants who took part in the workshop or who are interested in this work are encouraged to read the ALR paper (Mann & Walsh, 2013). We are also interested in hearing from anyone who might like to allow us to use examples (in the form of transcripts) of reflection in action in a forthcoming book. We are currently developing a network of teachers and researchers who are interesting in developing a more data-led and systematic approach to reflective practice

and we anticipate further publications and research projects in this area.

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(2) Scholarship Winner's Report

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As a member of Research SIG I applied for and was awarded a scholarship to attend the pre-conference event in Liverpool. I was grateful for the financial support. Moreover, I felt that it was recognition of the work that I have contributed to the field of education.

The talk was given by Professor Steve Walsh of Newcastle University and Dr Steve Mann of the University of Warwick. I wanted to attend the event for three reasons: 1) to learn more about research, 2) to improve my practice, and 3) to meet researchers. Where I live and work, I have no contact with other researchers – I am an English teacher at a grammar secondary school in Vorarlberg, Austria, where I teach students from the first class, aged 10, to the last class, usually aged 18. As a schoolteacher, I am first and foremost a practitioner; however, it is my goal to research as well. The support from Research SIG demonstrates that teachers are valued partners in the world of research.

The event began at 10am and ended at 5pm. It was divided into four sessions:

1) Introduction to approaches to collecting and using spoken data as a means of:

- improving professional practice
- becoming an active reflective practitioner
- researching your own context
- making professional development more dialogic and evidence-base

2) Collecting and analysing data from different teaching contexts using tools such as

- stimulated recall
- self-evaluation checklists
- peer review
- lesson transcripts
- 'snapshot' recordings
- video interaction and guidance

3) Researching professional talk and professional talk in research

4) Discussion of research questions and research opportunities

There were many attendees from various countries. We were divided up into small groups several times, thus gaining opportunities to meet each other. While we had discussions, Steve Mann and Steve Walsh visited the various groups to listen and answer questions. After each small group discussion, we were invited to share our thoughts openly. Additionally, attendees were invited to speak about the research activities in their institutions and what they were involved in. I certainly learned more from this one-day event than I could have done from reading a course book.

One research method we heard about was 'stimulated recall.' This is an introspective method suitable for examining the learning process which often involves the replay of videotapes or audiotapes of teaching lessons to stimulate comments on the teacher's thought processes at the time of teaching. Like other research methods, stimulated recall has both advantages and disadvantages. It was interesting to hear a first-hand account from researchers who are actually practicing it. This technique of collecting data seems very useful in research into teaching. I have never done such research and I have never seen it done by anyone. Thus, the event was a real eye-opener.

There was also an interesting comparison of research with Icarus and Narcissus of Greek mythology. Icarus ignored instructions on not flying too close to the sun with his waxed feathers and fell into the sea, while Narcissus fell in love with his own beauty and died because he refused to leave his reflection in a pool. I may not have completely understood the comparison,

but I believe it was to show that a researcher who does not follow instructions could end up going in the wrong direction, while someone who is completely satisfied with his or her work and does nothing to improve will end up not getting anywhere.

The most important message that I took away from the event was that I could do my own research right where I am. From the handouts and presentations, I learned how to collect and analyse data, come up with a research question and find research opportunities. Up until now, a common image of research has been that it is undertaken at university level, where professors will either publish or perish. Research was supposedly out of reach for the common practitioner. Fortunately, the presenters did not subscribe to this conception and encouraged us to become researchers at any level.

Sadly, schoolteachers are not trained to do research, have little time to do research, are not expected to do research. Even if they did, it would not get them a promotion or higher pay. Thus, research is for me and other teachers a noble endeavour in which we hope to better ourselves as practitioners. Good enough reason to get started!

Fortunately for me, after the IATEFL conference ended, Steve Mann invited the attendees to contribute to his book *Research and Qualitative Interviews: Interaction and Reflective Practice*, which will be published by Palgrave Macmillan. I accepted his invitation and interviewed my friend, also an English teacher in Austria. My interview was accepted for publication. This is a small contribution on my part, but very exciting nonetheless.

In conclusion, the event was 1) informational -- it took quite a while to go through and understand all my notes afterwards, and 2) inspirational to hear of other educators' experiences. Additionally, it provided a great opportunity to network with researchers as well as future researchers; and other teachers who are on my level and starting out, trying to learn the ropes

Eliciting data in second language research: Challenges and innovations - A series of invited colloquia, hosted by the IRIS project, 2 - 3 September 2013, University of York

Sarah Mercer¹

At the beginning of September, the IRIS (a digital repository of data collection instruments for research into second language learning and teaching; <http://www.iris-database.org>) project team hosted a two-day conference at the University of York. IRIS is digital repository of data collection instruments for research into second language learning and teaching. The materials stored in the database are freely accessible and can be searched according to various criteria, e.g., research area, type of data collection tool. Members of the research community can both upload and download data collection tools. It represents an ambitious project and is an incredibly valuable resource for those working in this field, whether early-stage or experienced researchers (see link below). The conference was designed to generate discussion about research methodologies and data collection tools across a broad range of areas and to showcase the kinds of tools uploaded on IRIS.

To date over 220 data collection tools are hosted on the IRIS database, each with information about the nature and use of the materials. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, at present, the collection largely comprises quantitatively-oriented tools, given that such research requires pre-determined constructs, and emphasises replicability as well as valid and reliable (consistent) measures. However, the IRIS team explicitly also seek to include more qualitatively-oriented tools and the database already includes, for example, a number of interview and observation protocols, prompts and guidelines. Naturally, the aim of qualitative research is rarely to replicate, certainly not

¹ With special thanks to Emma Marsden for useful feedback and input.

to generalise and the frequently mentioned criteria of validity and reliability are not suitable for evaluating such studies when conceptualised in quantitative terms. It is possibly the inherent nature of the underlying ethos and approach to qualitative studies that make researchers reluctant to upload data generation tools, given that these often do not make sense beyond the bounds and specificities of a certain context, time and place. However, the aim of IRIS to make research designs and approaches transparent and data collection tools accessible to a wider audience can only be embraced by all researchers whatever their methodological orientation. In addition, a key rationale behind IRIS is that the materials can be adapted or entirely changed for different contexts, participants and research interests. No matter how 'brief' the prompts are (compared to the rich data that can ensue), being able to see these prompts that are used to generate qualitative data, can give greater insight into the data collected and the themes extracted, and also into how materials may (or may not) be useful.

The conference itself also reflected the natural tendency of IRIS to be defined primarily by quantitative researchers and methods. During the two-days of presentations, the vast majority of talks were concerned with experimental or quantitative designs with only two talks and a handful of posters employing a qualitative approach or mixed method design. Topics covered included identity, L2 processing, knowledge of grammar, working memory, oral interaction and priming effects, although the database itself reflects a broader range of topics than the conference was able to cover in such a short time.

An especially praiseworthy dimension to the conference was the encouraged openness with which participants discussed the strengths and also pitfalls and drawbacks of their methodological approaches and tools. What struck me strongly during the conference was the need for more opportunities to open up discourse not only across areas and fields of SLA, but, importantly, across research epistemologies and methodologies. I enjoyed hearing about other people's challenges in eliciting and working with data, and, whilst our focus and even approaches may have differed, the concerns for quality, a respect for ethics and a desire to ultimately help us better understand processes of language learning are common across all studies.

On a personal level, my own area of interest is in the self, which to date I have tended to research qualitatively, given my own focus on and preference for situated, holistic data. However, during my career so far, I have often had to defend my research against being critically evaluated using inappropriate criteria and frameworks that are better suited for evaluating quantitative studies. An interesting discussion at the conference was my discovery that a researcher

investigating identity from a quantitative perspective also faced similar problems in having to defend her work in this area against those with a view that the self can only truly be researched from a qualitative perspective. As I have argued strongly elsewhere (Mercer & Williams, in print), the self (indeed anything connected to the human undertaking of teaching and learning a foreign language) is so complex and vast that we surely cannot ever be so short-sighted as to think there is one single best method for researching it. Instead, I feel that we should be embracing methodological diversity – let a hundred flowers and schools of thought bloom (quote from Mao Tse-tung). Although the IRIS conference was only able to make tentative steps in this direction, one of the strengths of this mixed and varied group of participants was the wonderful potential for learning across ways of thinking and working. I was left enriched and convinced of the need for more opportunities in our field for such cross-methodological discourse.

Another discourse gap that many acknowledge needs bridging is that between teachers and researchers. The focus at this conference was clearly on the academic research community, the delegates being postgraduate students or academics wishing to learn more widely about, specifically, research methodology. At a short two-day conference, the organisers cannot possibly be expected to include every perspective, topic area and stakeholder group, so the absence of teacher researchers in York should not be viewed as a criticism. However, teachers currently engaged in various forms of practitioner research would be valuable participants at such conferences in the future. They could contribute an important voice to discussions grounded in real-world teaching contexts and help ensure a connection to practice. Indeed, one of the reasons why IRIS was established was to give teachers better access to research materials, as presented by Emma Marsden at the Research SIG at the IATEFL conference in Liverpool, 2013, as well as at several other teacher forums. In this way, IRIS is truly an innovation, making practical bridges between teaching and research communities and ensuring that the research process is transparent to practitioners; a process which will continue over the next few years funded by the British Academy. As Emma Marsden reported at the end of the conference, a good indicator that some of this work is already having a positive impact is that, currently, approximately one third of all downloads from IRIS are by practising language teachers and tutors; another third is by students; and the remaining third is by academics/professional researchers.

SLA is a complex and broad field. This makes it both an exciting and challenging domain to work within. The conference was an excellent opportunity to learn about areas and methods from beyond my comfort zone and areas of familiarity. I left energised and reflecting on the

need for more common spaces such as this to open up discourse across different areas of interest, epistemological and methodological convictions, and professional spaces. There are a diversity of voices and viewpoints in SLA; all of which have something to add to our understanding of how we can ultimately help learners to better learn and use their foreign languages. The more pieces of the puzzle we can bring together, the fuller the picture of SLA that we collaboratively generate will be.

To find out more and explore IRIS, please visit: <http://www.iris-database.org>

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Links and Resources

In the 'Resources' section of our website

(<http://resig.weebly.com/resources.html>)

you can find information and links to the following:

1. Three video-recorded Research SIG workshops on a selection of research methods and approaches, which were held between January and July 2012:

10/02/2012

'**Designing and analysing questionnaires**' with Professor Zoltán Dörnyei, Coventry University, UK.

The video covers:

- a) Multi-item scales
- b) Main types of questionnaire items
- c) Writing items that work
- d) The format of the questionnaire
- e) How large should the sample be?
- f) Processing questionnaire data

and the supporting materials available include the following pdfs:

- Constructing, administering and processing questionnaires
- Workshop materials

19/03/2012

'**Researching-as-Teaching**' with Dr Sarah Mercer, Dr Richard Smith and Dr Ema Ushioda, the SIG's Pre-Conference Event, IATEFL Glasgow, UK.

The video covers:

- a) Ema Ushioda & Richard Smith: Combining teaching and researching
- b) Richard Smith: Student feedback
- c) Sarah Mercer: Learner histories
- d) Ema Ushioda: Additional 'tools' for teacher research

and the supporting materials available include the following ppt slides:

- How to combine teaching and researching
- Student feedback
- Learner histories
- Additional tools for teacher research

12/05/2012

'**Qualitative Research in Language Education**' with Professor David Nunan, in Graz, Austria.

The video covers:

- a) Getting started with classroom research
- b) What is research and why do we do it?
- c) Classroom research, qualitative data and case studies
- d) Analysing qualitative data

and the supporting materials available include the following ppt slides:

- Getting started with classroom research
- Approaches to qualitative research
- Developing a project plan

2. Slides and handouts from the Research SIG Pre-Conference Event '**Researching Professional Talk**' by Steve Walsh and Steve Mann, which took place on the 8th April 2013 in Liverpool, UK.

The materials available include:

- Classroom Talk (2) (pdf from ppts)
- Session 2 (Word document - handout)
- SETT framework (Word document - handout)
- Changing Classrooms (Action Research) (pdf from ppts)
- Roles, Relationships and identity in Qualitative Interviews (pdf from ppts)
- Session 4 (Word document - handout)
- Shaping Reflective Tools to Context (ppts)

Apart from materials from our events, the website also contains information and links to other useful sources, such as:

- a) **The International Research Foundation for English Language Education (TIRF) Resources** - where you can find reference lists on 115 topics of current interest, information about journals and organisations in our field, access to training about protecting human subjects in research, information about grants and fellowships, and an annotated bibliography on language classroom research, teacher research, and research methodology.
- b) Sources of **freely available EFL research reports online** (pdf), compiled by Deborah Bullock, with additional work by Richard Smith and Catherine Thomas.

Finally, in the '**In the World**' section of our website, you can currently find a categorized bibliography, some useful resources and a Facebook group on ELT research in Chile.

**IATEFL RESEARCH SIG DAY - HARROGATE 2014,
CONFERENCE DAY 1 - WEDNESDAY 2ND APRIL,
Room: Harewood (in Holiday Inn Hotel)**

1.1	1040-1125	<p>Insights into Language Learning Psychology: Bringing in Teachers' Perspectives (workshop) Christina Gkonou (University of Essex, UK) and Mark Daubney (Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal)</p> <p><i>This workshop centres on ongoing research with teachers in Austria, Greece and Portugal, on the importance of language learning psychology (LLP). Workshop participants will discuss and explore which aspects of LLP they - and the teachers of our study - consider to be priorities in their settings. Further discussion will focus on 'participant benefits' built into the research design.</i></p>
	1125-1200	Break
1.2	1200-1305	<p>Forum on 'Supporting Teacher-Research: Challenges and Opportunities'</p> <p>1) Action Research for Teacher Learning: Opportunities and Challenges Fauzia Shamim (Taibah University, Saudia Arabia)</p> <p><i>What opportunities and challenges does action research present for teachers' individuated learning in their everyday life and work contexts? This session addresses this question with illustrative examples from educational settings in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. An important question is raised for follow-up discussion: Can action research be institutionalized as a teacher development strategy in teachers' everyday life and work contexts?</i></p> <p>2) 'Helping Teachers Become Action Researchers through (despite?) Teacher Education' Mark Wyatt (University of Portsmouth, UK)</p> <p><i>Although some teachers focus on instrumental goals during teacher education, others are highly intrinsically motivated, conscious of practical benefits, including growing capacity to support and research learning. Drawing on examples from Oman, this talk highlights how transformative growth can occur in intrinsically motivated teachers: if teacher education is situated in local contexts, incorporates mentoring, and promotes reflection and action research.</i></p> <p>3) Managing Teacher-research -- A Project with Chilean Secondary School Teachers Richard Smith (University of Warwick, UK) and Paula Rebolledo (British Council, Chile)</p> <p><i>Teacher engagement in research can be a particularly empowering form of continuing professional development, but how to support it effectively is a major issue. In this talk we share lessons learned from an innovative project, co-sponsored by the British Council Chile and the Chilean Ministry of Education, which placed teacher-research at centre stage within an in-service CPD [Continuing Professional Development] intervention.</i></p>
	1305-1405	Break
1.3	1405-1450	<p>Watching our Words – Researching and Developing Language Counselling (workshop) Felicity Kjisik and Leena Karlsson (Helsinki University Language Centre, Finland)</p> <p><i>In this workshop we will describe the research and development of language counselling as practised in autonomous language learning modules (ALMS) at Helsinki University Language Centre. Showing video extracts of counselling sessions, we invite workshop participants to experience for themselves the process of exploratory practice and the development of counselling skills.</i></p>
1.4	1505-1535	<p>Children and Teachers Becoming Researchers – A Project in India (talk) Annamaria Pinter (University of Warwick, UK) and Rama Mathew (Delhi University, India)</p> <p><i>Research in ELT classrooms worldwide has been completely adult-dominated and children's potential as active contributors has been ignored. A radical change of perspective, we suggest, is that children can be involved as active research participants or even as co-researchers alongside their teachers. We report on an ongoing project conducted in Indian primary schools where children are enabled to become researchers.</i></p>
1.5	1550-1635	<p>Research SIG Open Forum (meeting)</p> <p><i>This is the SIG's main networking opportunity. Come along (even if you're not – yet! – a member of the SIG) and take part in discussions to help inform the SIG's activities over the coming year!</i></p>
	1635-1710	Break
1.6	1710-1740	<p>First Experience of Exploratory/Action Research: Improving Oral Presentations (talk) Katie Moran (EFREI, France)</p> <p><i>This presentation, given by a newcomer to exploratory/action research, is about a project aimed at improving university students' oral presentations. The eye-opening, motivating experience of exploring the students' perceptions and treating them as critical, creative actors in the learning process will be shared with the aim of opening a dialogue with the audience.</i></p>
1.7	1755-1825	<p>The contribution of Exploratory Practice to professional development: research findings (talk) Susan Dawson (University of Manchester / INTO Manchester, UK)</p> <p><i>How can teachers take charge of their own professional development and maintain the momentum throughout their teaching lives? This talk looks at how one form of practitioner research, Exploratory Practice, is helping teachers to do that. Using data from a narrative research project I highlight how the principles of EP contribute to the continuing professional development of six EFL practitioners.</i></p>



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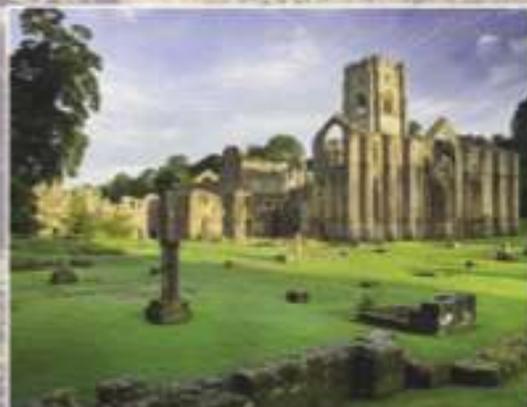


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Research SIG Events in 2014

TEC14 Conference Pre-Conference Event, 'Innovating in ELT Research'

20th February 2014, Hyderabad, India

This one-day workshop, facilitated by **Paul Gunashekar**, **Rama Mathew** and **Richard Smith** and organized by The British Council India, is for teachers and teacher educators interested in engaging in ELT research, maybe for the first time. The Research SIG will be contributing towards travel expenses within India and event registration for two participants. Further details: <http://resig.weebly.com/events>

IATEFL Conference ReSIG Pre-Conference Event, 'Teachers Research!'

1st April 2014, Harrogate, UK

If you are a teacher engaged or interested in researching your classroom practice or a mentor of such research, this event is for you! **Dick Allwright**, **Anne Burns** and **David Nunan** will all be with us to offer their insights and guidance. Further details are available on the Research SIG website: <http://resig.weebly.com/events.html>

'Teacher Researchers in Action' (Two-day Conference)

27-28th June 2014, Izmir, Turkey

organised by Gediz University, Izmir, Turkey, and supported by the Research SIG. **Anne Burns** and **Dick Allwright** are the guest speakers part-sponsored by the Research SIG, and the call for presentation (including poster) proposals is open for this event. Please see the conference website <http://www.actionresearchconference.info> for further information and do consider joining us!