



ELT RESEARCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IATEFL RESEARCH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP



February 2016 - Issue 31

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About 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: <http://resig.weebly.com/> (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*

Submissions for *ELT Research*, published once a year by the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group, should be sent to resigeditors@gmail.com. Please visit the SIG website <http://resig.weebly.com/> for author guidelines (under 'Publications').

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Editing and layout

This issue was edited by Ana Inés Salvi, Mark Wyatt and Sandie Mourão.
Layout by Sandie Mourão.

We are grateful to Guillermina Victoria for allowing us to use her picture, *Wandering Spirit*, on our front cover.
<http://wilhelmina18.wix.com/arte-victoria>

Editorial

Dear all,

Welcome to the latest issue of *ELT Research*! We are pleased to bring you another high quality issue packed with interesting articles, and characterized by a strong practitioner research element.

After a note from the ReSIG coordinators, the first four contributions portray different forms of teacher/practitioner research, namely, action research, exploratory practice, and lesson study. These include Emily Edwards, who highlights how engaging in action research can support English language teachers' long-term professional development. Emily draws on data provided by participants of an English Australia Action Research program that has run since 2010 and has already clearly had a very beneficial impact in encouraging sustained development in participants once the course has finished. Next, Judith Hanks and colleagues reflect on an exploratory practice event held at Leeds in May 2015. This brought together over 45 participants from around the world, with considerable input in particular from Brazil; the event was characterized by a discussion of how shared principles and key values can be put into practice. In the third article, drawing on her own experience of doing exploratory practice, Susan Dawson explores what it means to other practitioners and concludes that exploratory practice can contribute positively to continuing professional development. Another form of practitioner research is the subject of our fourth article, for in this Seyit Omer Gok reports on engaging English language teachers in lesson study in Turkey. Lesson study, an approach which originated in Japan, involves the collaborative planning, teaching, reflecting upon and analysing of research lessons.

The next three articles focus on innovation in different ways. In an interview based on his plenary at the 'Self in Language Learning' conference in Turkey 2015, Hayo Reinders talks with Ana Inés Salvi about learning beyond the classroom, arguing that we are at an exciting time in the history of education, with all sorts of opportunities for less formal learning facilitated by technology opening up. With regard to research methodology, our next article features Volha Arkhipenka reflecting on using narrative inquiry in her research with in-service teachers. She considers how it can support professional development, for both the researcher and the participating teachers. Next, Mehvish Saleem and her colleagues argue that research training courses should promote creativity. After making links between creativity and research, they raise implications for practice. In the eighth article in the volume, Andrea Kulmhofer reviews Brown and Clarke's book *'Successful qualitative research: A practical guide*

for beginners'. She discusses the book critically section by section, identifying its value to potential readers.

In the last four articles, our contributors share research experiences from East and West Asia, Africa, South-East Europe and the Middle East. First, reporting on empirical research in Taiwan, Yi-Mei Chen examines learners' attitudes (so often unfortunately neglected) towards communicative activities. Then, in an interview based on his plenary at IATEFL 2015, Harry Kuchah Kuchah talks with Mark Wyatt about addressing the challenges of teaching English in difficult circumstances, with particular reference to Cameroon. Next, Fauzia Shamim, a researcher who also has considerable experience of helping teachers in difficult circumstances, reflects on supporting action research in two different contexts, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. She highlights implications for future projects that relate to teacher motivation and creating facilitative conditions for research. Our final article, by Simon Munford, who is based in Turkey, a national context where there has been considerable interest of late in teacher research, writes about why this kind of practitioner research should be published and how this process can be facilitated.

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to this issue and hope you enjoy reading it. As a new co-editing team we would also like to thank Richard Smith and Gosia Sky for their invaluable work as co-editors (with Ana Ines Salvi) of *ELT Research* for issues 26 to 30. We wish them all the best.

Don't forget, if you would like to contribute to *ELT Research*, please get in touch – resigeditors@gmail.com. The deadline for Issue 32 is 15 June 2016.

Ana Inés Salvi
Mark Wyatt
Sandie Mourão



ELT Research Issue 31 editors' meeting
Manchester, April 2015

A note from the coordinators

ReSIG supports and promotes research in English language teaching through various publications, online activities as well as face-to-face events. We have a particular interest in supporting early-stage and practitioner researchers to take their first steps in research, and in helping sustain their engagement in and with research. However, we also aim to be a natural home for more experienced researchers as well as graduate students to connect with each other and have the chance to discuss various methodological and research issues.

2015 was a busy year for the SIG with the publication of two outstanding collections of practitioner research available as e-books from our website: <http://resig.weebly.com/books.html>. As of this year, we are ensuring that members get access to articles as they become available. This means we will have advanced access to articles in a members-only section of the website, as well as the full print version, which will bring them all together once a year in January/February. As you can no doubt imagine, editing the newsletter involves a vast amount of work and a huge thank you goes to the dedicated editors who work so hard on this.

In 2015, the SIG also hosted various face-to-face events, including an excellent *Teachers Research!* conference in Turkey that will become an annual ReSIG conference. There were also several ReSIG supported events, including webinars led by a range of researchers. ReSIG will be hosting and supporting a number of events this year, an example of which is a practitioner research conference being held in Latin America in March.

Naturally, the high points of the year are the PCE event and SIG day at the annual IATEFL conference, both of which give SIG members a chance to network with each other and contribute their feedback on the SIG and its developments. At the 2015 IATEFL conference David Nunan, Sue Garton and Cynthia White led an exciting PCE focusing on teacher research during which a number of practitioners delivered poster presentations. The videos of the impulse sessions and poster presentations can be watched on the SIG's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0IXy9pYmzzMaXmwMlsrDMg>.

This year's PCE on 12 April in Birmingham promises to be equally exciting. Dr Steve Mann from the University of Warwick will encourage participants to reflect on the use of interviews in EFL research. Participants will help

Steve to create an interview guide to use with Graham Hall, the editor of *ELT Journal*.

The SIG day on 15 April will involve the participation of a number of established and early-stage researchers who will be addressing a variety of topical issues in ELT research. These include Christina Gkonou on becoming an emotionally and socially intelligent EFL teacher; Catherine Walter on what makes second language writing difficult to understand; Mark Wyatt on writing about research through poetry; and Barbara Roosken on resilient teachers. As part of the SIG day, ReSIG organizes an open forum at which members and prospective members can learn more about the SIG's activities and the benefits of membership. We invite you to attend both our PCE and SIG day and help to enrich both events.

Online the SIG has been very active with its regular Yahoo! discussions, webinars, social media presence, and YouTube channel. These different media act as a repository of resources for all those interested in ELT research. To ensure you are up-to-date with events past, present and future, join our Facebook group, follow us on Twitter and LinkedIn, and subscribe to our YouTube channel. Moreover, you might wish to regularly take a look at our website so as not to miss anything interesting. It is also worth noting that we frequently offer scholarships to attend many of the SIG-supported events; these are advertised in advance on all our electronic media.

Apart from taking part in the activities organized by ReSIG, we would like to invite you to take an active role in our group by sharing your own experiences and ideas. We are always looking for contributions to our newsletter or ideas (and hosts) for events, so please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any enquiries or suggestions. You can contact us at any time by email: resig@iatefl.org

Best wishes for 2016,



Sarah Mercer and Daniel Xerri

The impact of action research on teachers' continuous professional development

Emily Edwards

Introduction

Language teacher continuous professional development (CPD) is an area of research and practice that is currently receiving significant attention, as academics, teacher trainers and managers strive to improve the models of CPD used in ELT contexts around the world. In line with current perspectives of CPD that consider teacher learning as a "dynamic social activity that is situated in physical and social contexts" (Johnson, 2009: 1), action research is viewed as a useful CPD option since it is integrated into the activity of teaching. The growing interest in action research as a model of CPD was evident at the recent IATEFL 2015 conference, where more than ten talks were explicitly based on an action research approach used to address a teacher's particular classroom issue. In addition, there were six talks (including mine) discussing the implementation, value or impact of teachers doing action research, as well as a considerable emphasis on CPD approaches in general.

As part of the move towards research-based approaches to teacher CPD, Cambridge English Language Assessment has been funding national action research programs in Australia since 2010 (organised by peak body English Australia) and in the UK since 2014 (organised by English UK). Each program runs for nine months annually, and involves a series of workshops facilitated by experts in teacher-research, culminating in a conference presentation and then publication of teachers' action research reports. Around six action research projects are accepted per year in each country, with teachers working either individually or in pairs. To participate, teachers must work for an English Australia or English UK-affiliated college, and submit a short research proposal as an expression of interest.

While these programs reflect current theoretical perspectives on CPD, little is actually known about the specific impacts that this kind of informal, practice-based collaborative program can have on the participating teachers. Studies such as Wyatt (2011), involving pre-service teachers on a Bachelor's program,

and Atay (2008), involving in-service teachers on a training program, hint at the benefits of action research, such as the development of research skills and teachers feeling empowered to make changes. Research into other contexts is needed, and especially studies investigating whether benefits can be sustained over time, thereby contributing to continuous development.

The study reported on here explores the impact of the English Australia Action Research program on the English language teachers who have taken part in this program since 2010. This is the first of a series of studies within a larger research project that uses different lenses (longitudinal, cross-sectional, teacher and manager perspectives) to better understand the full impact of this action research program. This report, based on my IATEFL 2015 presentation, focuses in detail on the research design of the first study, and then briefly summarises the preliminary findings, as well as some implications for further research.

Research design

The main research question that guided this study was: What sustained impacts does participating in an action research program have on English language teachers' professional development? A qualitative case study design was used, employing multiple data sources to generate a rich, detailed account of the teachers' experiences (Richards, 2003). The research participants were teachers who had previously completed the annual nine-month English Australia Action Research program between 2010 and 2013. The sampling method used was 'homogeneous' (Dörnyei, 2007) or 'purposeful' (Richards, 2003), since this cohort of teachers were targeted in order to understand more about the experiences of this specific group. From a total of 32 potential participants, 16 teachers volunteered to participate in the study, representing all four years of the program. All of these teachers taught in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) colleges in Australian cities.

Three main sources of data were collected and triangulated: teachers' action research reports, an online survey, and semi-structured interviews. First, an analysis of 17 action research reports published by the 2010, 2011 and 2012 program participants in *Cambridge Research Notes* (issues 44, 48 and 53) was conducted. The reports were written at the end of each program and all conclude with reflections about the impact, benefits and challenges experienced. A simple content analysis of these sections, consisting of several readings, highlighting the relevant sections, and then a frequency count of the most common themes, resulted in a list of ten specific impacts. The impacts were categorised according to three levels, the teacher, the classroom and the school, and are shown in Table 1. These ten themes signified the immediate impacts of the action research program, as perceived by the teachers.

Table 1: Themes identified in the teachers' published action research reports

Specific immediate impacts of action research (themes)	Level of impact	Number of reports (out of 17) this theme was identified in
1) Improvements in teaching methods and strategies	Individual teacher	10
2) Improvements in knowledge and use of research skills		8
3) Development in critical awareness as a teacher		8
4) Improvements in knowledge/theory about teaching		6
5) Increase in teacher motivation		2
6) Better understanding of students' needs	Classroom (teacher-students)	8
7) Improvements in students' learning		5
8) Improvements in school's materials/syllabuses	School	7
9) Benefits from collaboration		5
10) Initiating other teachers' professional development		2

Table 2: Survey format

Section of survey		Number of questions	Types of questions
Part A	Background to action research project	3	Multiple choice and short answer
	Impact of action research program (relating to ten themes identified in <i>Research Notes</i> reports)	10	Multiple choice (using a Likert scale for agreement with each statement) and long answer after each one ("Please add detail")
	Impact of action research program (relating to whether the impact has been sustained and how)	7	Multiple choice (yes/no), and a long answer after each one ("Please add detail")
Part B	Participant profile questions	7	Multiple choice and short answer

The next stage of the data collection process aimed to investigate whether these immediate impacts were sustained over several years, and whether other impacts were also significant. An online survey was designed to incorporate the ten themes so that the teachers could retrospectively evaluate whether they had personally experienced these impacts, and to what extent, and then provide more detail about each one. The structure of the survey is shown in Table 2.

Once the 16 participants had completed the online survey anonymously, they could contact the researcher to take part in a semi-structured interview of 30 to 40 minutes, and ten teachers volunteered and gave informed consent. The purpose of the interviews was to allow participants to expand on their experiences and provide more details about how the impacts had been sustained in their contexts. The interview questions

were structured around six topics as follows: 1) Background, 2) Reaction to survey, 3) Impact at individual teacher level, 4) Impact on students, 5) Impact at school level, 6) More detail about how the impacts have been sustained over time.

Data from the surveys and interviews was collated and analysed both separately and then using a cross-analysis procedure. One aspect of the survey analysis involved identifying how strong the overall agreement was amongst the 16 teachers about each of the ten themes from the action research reports. After that, two rounds of coding were conducted on the long answers teachers provided to explain each impact, and four main themes emerged from this analysis that showed deeper insight into the teachers' experiences than had been understood from the initial ten themes. A cross-four new themes from the survey data and incorporating

comments from the interviews into existing themes, or adapting the themes as necessary.

Findings

Themes from survey

In general, the answers teachers provided in the Likert scale survey questions correlated with the initial immediate impacts identified in the action research reports (Table 1). Fourteen or more of the teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with experiencing impacts 1, 2, 3 and 4 (at the individual teacher level) and 6 (at the classroom level) over the years since their action research projects. The survey results showed less agreement about impacts at the school level, suggesting that such impacts are probably context-dependent: it depends whether and when syllabus renewal happens, how much collaboration usually occurs, and whether there are opportunities available for sharing the action research results. However, the impacts of the action research program on individual teacher development came through strongly, and were then analysed more deeply in the cross-analysis.

Themes from cross-analysis

The cross analysis resulted in the four following themes emerging about what the teachers perceived to be the main sustained impacts on them as a result of taking part in the action research program:

- 1) More confident about teaching
- 2) More connected to their students
- 3) More engaged with and in research
- 4) More recognised and valued

These themes, while similar in some ways to the 'immediate impact' themes, also show different impacts: that the teachers were still doing research and reading research articles several years on, and that they felt recognised and valued by managers and teachers at their and other institutions. Some teachers had commenced a research degree, while others were using the action research framework to explore other classroom issues. Also, 13 of the 16 teachers interviewed had published at least one more article apart from the one required for the program, and many had presented at workshops and conferences.

To illustrate the four themes, a selection of comments from the surveys and interviews are provided here, which are representative of the whole group. Firstly, the teachers felt more confident about their teaching and their ability to explore and classroom issues:

My confidence in my teaching has also improved, as we were able to show that our actions had a tangible and positive effect on our students.
(Survey: Teacher 1)

I feel better equipped to go about solving problems and issues in a much more systematic way.
(Survey: Teacher 2)

In terms of the second theme, teachers commented on the student perspective they had gained, and how they now understand and communicate better with their students:

The student feedback gave me an insight into their needs. My feedback to students has improved tremendously since the AR project.
(Survey: Teacher 3)

By interviewing the learners and getting them to do surveys, I actually got a better understanding of how learners approach [action research topic] [...] Now I've got this sort of student perspective.
(Interview: Teacher A)

There were also many comments about how the teachers are now engaged in writing and further research, such as this one:

I'm doing all sorts of writing, in the [national journal] [...] and then I've written recently in [a professional teaching magazine], so yeah, and all that's born I suppose from the interests that started in action research.
(Interview: Teacher B)

Finally, this is one of many comments that show how some of the teachers feel more recognised and valued as a result of taking part in action research:

During the year, I really felt like my profile at work really grew [...] people were paying attention to what I was doing, were interested in what I was doing, so in that respect I sort of earned a profile of sorts. (Interview: Teacher C)

Conclusion

The findings suggest that participation in the English Australia Action Research program had significant sustained impacts on the teachers' professional development, that they were able to make lasting improvements to their teaching as well as extend their research engagement and be recognised for their research, developing their 'profile' or status within their schools. Therefore, for these teachers, doing action research certainly fed into the process of continuous professional development, leading on to new projects and opportunities. While these results are encouraging, there are still many aspects of the action research impact that need to be better understood. The impacts on individual teachers are clear, but whether and how schools may benefit more widely from a teacher's action research project remains unclear. It will also be important to explore the factors that help the impacts of action research to be sustained. The next stages of this research project aim to explore some of these issues through a longitudinal study of teachers' development and also interviews with managers about their perspectives on the use of action research within the CPD framework.

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“Why exploratory practice?” A collaborative report

Judith Hanks, Inés Miller, Clarissa Xavier Ewald, Sabine Mendes Lima Moura, Carolina Apolinário, Assia Slimani-Rolls, Jess Poole, Bee Bond, Dick Allwright, Ana Inés Salvi and Yasmin Dar

Introduction

Judith: On 6 May 2015, the Centre for Language Education Research (CLER), University of Leeds, hosted a one-day Seminar: “Why Exploratory Practice?”

There were 45+ participants from all over the world. Some were local to Leeds, others came from Birmingham, London, York, while others flew in from Belgium and Brazil. Participants adjusted their busy schedules to attend for an hour between lessons, or the whole day. There was a vibrant atmosphere as discussions ranged over recent developments in the Exploratory Practice (EP) group in Rio de Janeiro, as well as in EP in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and EP as a form of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The day ended with an open floor, in which questions such as how to convey the enjoyment we get from EP, while also remaining self-critical and self-aware, were discussed.



Photo 1: From left to right: Judith Hanks, Ines Miller, Yasmin Dar, Clarissa Xavier Ewald and Jess Poole

The following report exemplifies EP: different participants share their experiences for all to read and discuss. The day was also videoed, and clips will shortly be available on the Exploratory Practice Facebook page, and the University of Leeds website.

“Posters from Rio de Janeiro: an inductive Exploratory Practice experience”

Inés: As representatives of the EP Group in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, we brought illustrative posters to the Seminar and invited participants to work inductively to infer what exploratory teachers *and* learners from different contexts in Rio do to enrich their understandings of what happens in their classrooms.

Participants with different backgrounds worked in groups to imagine what might have happened in the contexts where the posters were produced. They tried to guess *who* was involved and *why* the activity was implemented. This discussion generated opportunities for participants to analyze how regular pedagogic activities are adapted as Potentially Exploitable

Pedagogic Activities (PEPAs).

Interestingly, cultural perspectives were projected onto each poster and some participants needed more background information than others. Among the emerging questions were:

- How did the class move from the initial moments to the final poster?
- What language was spoken to produce this poster?
- Did this activity give the learners some control?
- Who made the poster(s): student teachers, pre-service or in-service (experienced) teachers?
- Or... was it pupils talking about their teachers?

Many participants were surprised to find that the posters were created by elementary school students, and not teachers at all.

By working to understand this material, participants could discuss definitions of EP and its underlying rationale, as developed in collaboration with Dick Allwright and the Rio de Janeiro EP Group. Such notions as 'Planning for understanding' and 'Quality of Classroom Life', which characterize the theoretical foundations of the EP framework, were introduced.

Clarissa: The principles of EP are both the framework and the methodology for academic research. From the perspective of a research-practitioner from Rio, I presented questions raised during the process of writing my PhD thesis.

I developed a Potentially Exploitable Reflective Activity (PERA) to understand my puzzle: *Why is it so difficult to write about Exploratory Practice?* Using the principles of Quality of Life for all, of mutual understanding and inclusivity, I asked teachers in the EP Group, Rio, to share their understandings of what EP meant for them. As EP involved their personal and their professional lives, many shared my difficulty, and also faced issues of multiple-identity-construction in their relations with other practitioners, including learners. Trying to define 'lived experiences' in the classroom and in other contexts was complex; the relationship between concepts and their definitions was hard to understand. However, these attempts to explain the deep meaning(s) of EP meant developing shared understandings of our repertoires. This was fulfilling for both the Group and me.

Sabine: I brought excerpts from an on-going practitioner research project dedicated to the construction of a collaborative thesis. Based in Rio, it includes a PhD student, university professor, eight undergraduates, and a state school English teacher.

Starting with: "What is the difference between academic and common-sense knowledge?" and: "Why do we write about research following the structure of chapters including a literature review, a methodology and an

analysis, when we know that they do not guarantee a sound methodological process?", we worked to understand our experiences with academic genre.

We designed five PEPAs and the original puzzles multiplied, eg "Why do people feel trapped by some academic situations?". Working with this question, we created an on-line activity where students were invited to generate "Keep Calm and..." posters, completing the sentence with whatever bothered them in academic life:

- "Keep Calm and... he thinks he is a PhDivinity"
- "Keep Calm and... I have narrowed my monographic paper's theme so much that I don't even recognize it anymore"
- "Keep Calm and... my teachers are mistaking me for an assignment-writing machine".

EP offers a means to express subjective issues related to Quality of Life. These are normally invisible in academic texts and researchers appear detached from common-sense experience. Collaborative writing projects could help design a more inclusive narrative-based genre to report complex research processes.



Photo 2: Sabine Mendes Lima talking about her practitioner-research based project

Our work also suggests that puzzles are analytical *per se*. Presenting an analysis in the Why-question format, instead of the traditional theory-data model, could make it less definite/defining and more representative of an infinite process of co-constructing understandings relevant to the community involved.

Carolina: I investigated how the principles and the philosophical approach of EP contribute to my work as an Educational Psychologist in a private bilingual school in Rio.

An ethical, collaborative, respectful approach to teaching and learning can benefit not only teachers and students, but also families, educational psychologists, and outside agencies working with those referred to the Ed. Psychology Section. This ethos of respect is crucial as practitioners endeavor to build 'deeper understandings' of their practices and the quality of the interpersonal relationships built in school.

In two professional meetings I led as the school educational psychologist with the teachers of class 7 (11-12 year-olds), we co-constructed 'bullying and cyber bullying' as a puzzling theme. Subsequently, the teachers and I planned an Exploratory Dynamic together, based on the premises of EP. In the session I presented the Potentially Therapeutic Reflexive Activity (PTRA) that triggered the discussion. This was intended to arouse the curiosity of the students and encourage free association and narratives about their hardship in school.

It elicited a puzzle from the students: 'Why does the class struggle to be together?' After their discussion, students produced graphics which analysed their difficulties in socialising. All (teachers, learners and psychologist) gained greater insight into the struggles of school life.

"Engagement is a two way process"

Assia: I presented a study of CPD working with academics from Business Studies in Higher Education who wished to understand their students' lack of engagement with their teaching. Using the principles of enhancing Quality of Life, understanding, mutual development and inclusivity, the teachers began to realise why they saw their learners as passive. Although they described their teaching as interactive and enabling learners to contribute to the teaching events, their analysis of their classroom data highlighted discursal features, which showed that they did not, in effect, honour their students' contributions. Instead, the teachers observed themselves

- monopolising classroom discourse
- prioritising their own agenda and time
- ignoring learners' responses and enquiries which deviated from their planned topics
- providing little opportunity for learners to tap into their background knowledge
- continuing to explain their points even when the learners had already shown clear evidence of knowledge

Following the analysis, the teachers realised that engagement is a two-way process. They also needed to engage with the students if they wished them to engage with their teaching.

"Exploratory Practice in EAP"

Judith: We presented our perspectives on the process of EP becoming part of our practice in EAP. We were particularly pleased to be able to share the platform, enabling the audience to hear ALL our voices.

I started by looking at the things we normally do in EAP, eg project work, oral presentations, and writing assignments. We wondered how to utilise 'normal pedagogic practices' from our EAP world as 'investigative tools'?

I then considered what puzzled us, and asked our students what puzzled them:

Jess: When one of my students ('Ted') puzzled about "Why do we learn bad words more easily?" I needed to take a risk: would he take it seriously, or was it just an excuse to say rude words in class? Taking that risk made me feel it was a more level playing field. Being honest with the students; admitting you don't know all the answers is something teachers are rarely able to do. But it was exciting for Ted to be able to choose his own question, and for me hearing his answers. The outcome was insightful work, with a desire to carry on studying, and a re-aligning of the teacher/student dynamic.



Photo 3: Assia Slimani-Rolls talking about a study of CPD with lecturers in Business Studies

Bee: My puzzle was "Why can't Middle Eastern students spell?". I shared the question with my students, and gained some insights from their first responses. I talked to colleagues in EAP, went to a primary school to learn from them, and read books/articles. The students became interested in my puzzle too, and they talked, thought, compared ideas and came back with more insights. I then tried out different materials and tasks which might help their spelling. Subsequently, my new puzzle developed: "Where does EP fit?" is it research, practice, or scholarship?



Photo 4: Bee Bond and participants inferring what learners and teachers do in Rio de Janeiro by looking at a poster they had created

Judith: My initial puzzle was "Why don't we do EP in EAP?". Working together with teachers and learners, I critically examined some challenges this raised:

- gravitas?
- motivation?
- fear of losing control?

Handing over control to learners, taking them seriously, enabled their/our creativity, leading to greater motivation. Students ran up the stairs to join their EP class, even when they had missed earlier classes. I saw learners and teachers enjoying their mutual development; gaining greater understanding of what puzzled them, and others, and hence of the difficulties we all face.



Photo 5: Dick Allwright, Ana Ines Salvi and participants inferring what learners and teachers do in Rio de Janeiro by looking at a poster they had created

Discussions

Dick: In this session, people who had some personal experience of EP sat at different tables and answered questions from newcomers about the ideas and practices that EP represents. To avoid that becoming a mini-lecture we also provided a short-list of potential topics for discussion. After thirty minutes we opened the floor with: "What is there to say?"

Discussions were wide-ranging and we include just two summaries here to give a 'flavour' of the questions raised.

Ana: I started by highlighting the importance of the EP principles in my own practice. This resonated with most. One person argued that parents would prefer a more instrumental education for their children. However, most of the group supported a view of education where practitioners have the space and autonomy to collaboratively develop their creativity and own understandings of issues relevant to them, in the classroom.

The second part of the discussion revolved around EP's scope. Because EP is a synthesis of different theoretical frameworks, it seems difficult to pin down what it tries to be: a stance, a methodology, a philosophy, or an epistemology. Questions asked were: Due to its broad scope might it lack academic credibility and be left academically isolated? Do all the different aspects need to be accepted as a whole?

Yasmin: The following points were raised: if we agree

that EP is a mind-set, why should we share it? In response, we agreed that like-minded people need to have a platform to share ideas and support each other. Another key point was raised: how many EP projects have been implemented around the world? We suggested that sharing EP work on social media (eg <https://www.facebook.com/Prática-Exploratória-Exploratory-Practice>) as well as publications such as ELTJ would reach a wider audience.

Conclusion

Judith: The Seminar was a day for coming together, for sharing and developing our ideas. Some people were 'old hands' who had been working with the EP framework for decades, while others were encountering EP for the first time. This made for lively discussions, as those who come from more traditional research-oriented backgrounds struggled with the notion of integrating research into pedagogy, while newcomers from a teaching-oriented background could understand the concepts and relate them to their own situations more quickly.

In the spirit of Exploratory Practice, this article is the work of many hands, working together and working also for mutual development. In all, we gained many insights through these rigorous and unflinching questioning processes. We hope you have enjoyed reading about it, and look forward to welcoming you to our next events.

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For those who are interested in reading more about Exploratory Practice, we include a few key references:

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Practice to Professional Development: what practitioners think

Susan Dawson

Introduction

It is increasingly recognized that teachers 'have not only a right to direct their own professional development but also a responsibility to develop professionally throughout their careers' (Johnson, 2006: 250). One of the ways in which teachers can do this is through engaging in practitioner research. During an MA TESOL course I discovered Exploratory Practice (Allwright, 2003, 2005; Allwright & Hanks, 2009), a form of inclusive practitioner research, which enabled me to regain what Prabhu (1990: 174) describes as a 'sense of plausibility' in my teaching; a developing understanding of how 'learning takes place and how teaching causes or supports that'. I was keen to know how Exploratory Practice (EP) was impacting the professional development (PD) of other teachers, and this article describes a small-scale study using a narrative-informed approach to explore this. I begin with a brief explanation of EP before outlining the study itself. I then examine the reasons the participants gave for their initial interest in EP, how that interest has grown and developed over time, interspersing the account with insights from my own EP experience, concluding that EP can make a positive contribution to PD.

What is Exploratory Practice?

Exploratory Practice does not claim to be a specific approach to professional development, nor a research or pedagogic method. Rather it is a way of doing practitioner research while getting the teaching and

learning done at the same time. The EP website describes it in the following way:

Exploratory Practice is an indefinitely sustainable way for classroom language teachers and learners, while getting on with their learning and teaching, to develop their own understandings of life in the language classroom.

Rather than a series of steps, EP is based on seven global principles:

- Principle 1 Put 'quality of life' first
- Principle 2 Work primarily to understand language classroom life
- Principle 3 Involve everybody
- Principle 4 Work to bring people together
- Principle 5 Work also for mutual understanding
- Principle 6 Integrate the work for understanding into classroom practice
- Principle 7 Make the work a continuous enterprise (Allwright, 2003: 128-130)

The emphasis is on quality of life rather than efficiency of work, understanding rather than problem-solving, collegiality rather than individuality, and sustainability rather than burn-out. To achieve this, learners and teachers work together using everyday pedagogic activities to understand their classroom lives. It was this inclusion of learners in the 'research' process, and the tangible benefits, enthusiasm and engagement that I had witnessed in my own classrooms (Dawson, 2012) that fuelled my continuing interest in EP.

The study

I asked seven teachers, all with an expressed interest in EP, to respond by email to the question 'Why are you interested in Exploratory Practice?' Six of these teachers (see Table 1 below) replied, and I analyzed their accounts in two ways: firstly to understand why they were initially drawn to EP; secondly, using the seven principles of EP as a deductive coding system, to understand its role in their PD.

Table 1. The respondents.

Respondent (Pseudonyms)	Position at time of study	Time involved with EP (at time of study)
Jenny	HE in England: Course Director, author and EAP teacher	15 years
Amy	HE in England: EAP teacher	1-2 years
Yvonne	HE in England: EAP teacher	4 years
Paula	HE in Taiwan: University English teacher	11 years
Steve	HE in England: University lecturer, PhD supervisor and author	> 7 years
Dave	FE in England: Director of Studies	< 1 year

The attraction of Exploratory Practice

Both Dave and Jenny were drawn to EP through a general interest in practitioner research and an intellectual quest to understand the differences between EP and Action Research (AR). For Dave:

Part of my interest in exploratory practice stems from my trying to resolve how it is different from action research. In some ways, this is more of an intellectual pursuit – but it is one that I find engaging.

Jenny highlights the different use of terminology, which at that time seemed to be the distinguishing factor between the two approaches, with the prime focus of AR being improvement, and EP understanding:

I was intrigued by the differences between EP and AR... and at that time what seemed to sum it up was the starting point of a 'puzzle' for EP, and a 'problem' for AR.

However, it is a pull towards finding solutions that seems to be the main reason for Amy's initial attraction to EP. She sees a similarity of contexts between her own country with its 'scarce resources and grammar-focused practices' and the work going on in Brazil:

Because this situation in my country worried me, I was open to see if I could find ways of working to improve it, and I found that EP seemed just perfect.

Here she identifies a problem: the situation in her country, the solution for which is EP. This might seem a contradiction to the principles of EP, whose 'aim... is 'working to understand life', not trying to directly solve problems' (Allwright, 2003: 128), and yet she goes on to speak of EP as a critical pedagogy that empowers the disadvantaged (in this case the learners) by giving them the tools with which to understand and challenge the status quo:

The reasons for this are that these learners in particular, who come from a disadvantageous position in society, more than anyone, need to be involved in work for understanding which will hopefully empower them to challenge their present situation.

This focus on the learners, who in EP are seen as 'key developing practitioners' (Allwright and Hanks, 2009:2), was also instrumental for Yvonne who wished to 'find a way to do research that was meaningful to [her] and [her] learners'. This very much reflects the belief that research should be relevant and beneficial to all concerned.

Quality of life

Only two of the respondents mentioned this first and overarching principle directly, which is perhaps partly a reflection of its elusive nature (Allwright and Hanks, 2009: 150). However, for both it seems to be related to job satisfaction. For Jenny it is clearly linked to her own professional development and growth as a teacher:

What keeps me interested in EP? In watching and listening to others explore what puzzles them, as I explore what puzzles me, I find that I am enjoying my job (well the teaching side of it, at least!) more and more ... In opening up areas for people to puzzle about, areas where I don't know the answers already, and neither do the teachers or learners, I feel I am developing, learning, hearing, understanding more. So that's what the 'quality of life' principle that EP talks about means to me.

For Paula, quality of life encompasses the learners as developing practitioners as well:

Once practitioners experience EP, the realization achieved can enrich the quality of life and enhance the meaningfulness of their teaching and learning.

It is interesting that for Paula, EP also seems to reflect her worldview and belief system, which appears to me to correlate with this idea of quality of life:

EP seems to resonate with certain philosophical principles in Buddhism related to the meaning of life, including the search for realization and happiness.

Here there is the recognition that 'being' in the classroom is inextricably linked to 'being' in life, the synthesis of who we are, what we believe, our goals, hopes and aspirations. In some respects this blurs the boundaries between my professional development and my general 'becoming' as a human being. It rejects the idea of a long-term compartmentalisation of life and work and instead speaks of integration.

Understanding

The second principle of working primarily for understanding, featured in most of the responses. Yvonne, Jenny, Paula and Dave all talk about the contrast between problem-solving and understanding, although for the first three, the emphasis is slightly different. Jenny speaks of the relief that comes through a focus on understanding:

Gone are the days of problem setting and the pressure to solve problems (which sometimes are impossible to solve - without a revolution anyway!). In their place is an atmosphere of genuine curiosity - I really want to know why... (fill in the blank with whatever my learners - colleagues - teachers have written as their questions)... and I am often surprised by the answers.

Yvonne, perhaps because of the negative connotations of the word 'problem', likes the fact that EP offers a framework for researching 'why something is working well in our language classroom'. Paula also reflects that 'understanding does not always have to come through problem-solving' but instead 'pausing for reflection may be more likely to lead to deeper understanding'.

Dave, in contrast, questions whether understanding is enough. Although he says that he finds the idea

'intriguing – liberating, perhaps; certainly reassuring', he also wrestles with the idea of whether understanding in itself generates knowledge or if that comes through action. His conclusion shows that in some senses this is still unresolved for him:

At the heart of these questions comes a very important question and one that would result in a genuine paradigm shift for me: "is it sometimes enough just to understand?" This raises a corollary question which is, "Can you ever understand if you don't experience?"

The concept of understanding, like many of those in EP, is complex and difficult to define. What does it really mean to understand something? Can you ever say that you have really understood something completely? Allwright and Hanks talk about understandings that are too deep for words (2009: 148) and Paula offers the flip side of this when she says that:

Such realization might eventually appear in the form of a few simple words, yet it is often achieved through a complex process of discovery.

Perhaps there is a paradox inherent in these comments, and maybe, part of our professional development is learning to live with such ambiguities.

Collegiality

The notion of collegiality is reflected in three of EP's principles (3-5) and was mentioned by several of the respondents who focused almost exclusively on the notion of including the learners as developing practitioners alongside the teachers. Jenny asserts that:

The idea of including learners as researchers alongside teachers and 'academics' is a radical and exciting one.

In EP, the learners are allowed to become the protagonists: the ones who set the 'research agenda' and work cooperatively with other learners and their teacher. It is this idea that prompts Steve to reflect on the benefits of this way of working for life in the classroom:

Even in supposedly learner-centered classes it is the teacher who is taking all the decisions. EP has the potential to bring teachers closer to their learners. We need to break down those teacher-learner barriers.

Although he doesn't specify what he considers those barriers to be, he seems to imply that it has to do with who makes the decisions and takes the initiative in the classroom. In my own experience of working within the principles of EP in the classroom, I have found that my professional development is intricately interwoven with the development of the learners themselves. As I give them the time and space to explore their language learning puzzles, my own understanding of them as learners and our work together in the classroom also grows and develops.

Sustainability

The concept of sustainability is embedded in the last two principles (6 & 7). Although none of the respondents mentioned the word 'sustainability', there were many phrases that expressed the flip-side of sustainability, the most common of which was the idea of 'burn-out'. If one is burnt out by something, then it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to sustain, and yet this feeling is not uncommon among teachers as Jenny testifies:

What particularly grabbed my attention then was the emphasis EP had on trying to avoid 'burn-out' for teachers/teacher-researchers. As I had come to the MA almost burnt-out myself, this was deeply resonant for me!

It is perhaps a testimony to the liveability of this principle that she had been an exploratory practitioner for 15 years already. Yvonne also cites the desire to find an alternative to potential burn-out as the key reason she was drawn to EP:

Most of all, I like the fact that the principles of EP make it clear that research should not lead to burn-out and extra stress for the teachers.

The ever-changing, dynamic and complex nature of the language classroom (Tudor, 2003) makes it crucial for practitioners to find sustainable ways to continue developing deeper understandings of the daily reality of classroom life. This can be done reflectively through EP.

Conclusion

This article has explored how the principles of EP are enabling teachers to reclaim their professional development in a collegial and sustainable way. However, it also illustrates, both through the participants' own accounts and their resonance with my experience, the important role of the learners in a teacher's professional development, and how inclusive practitioner research might facilitate that. Such research brings the learners centre stage (see Hanks, 2015 for an example of this), empowering them to take control of their learning *alongside* their teachers in the classroom context.

Note:

For a recent discussion on Action Research and other issues related to practitioner research, please see the ReSIG Yahoo group discussion on 'Supporting teacher research and encouraging exploratory practice':

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/resig/conversations/topic/s/1034>

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Lesson study in ELT

Seyit Omer Gok

Introduction

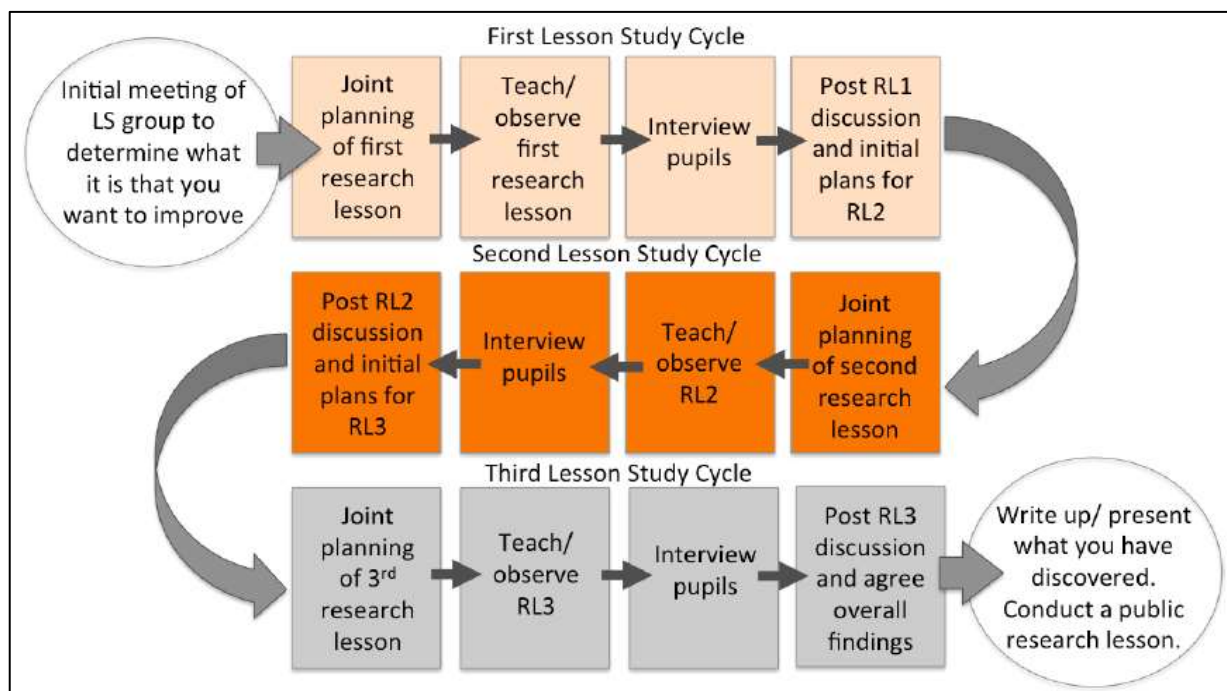
Improving student learning and teacher instruction is always the main aim of any educational institution. It is widely acknowledged that one way of realizing this aim is to encourage teachers to engage in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities and there are a variety of such activities, ranging from conferences to online resources, which are available for teachers. However, though it might not be right to claim that one particular activity is better than another, those requiring continuity, collaboration and reflection are widely acknowledged to be more effective than the ones in which participating teachers are in the role of 'knowledge consumers' (Borg 2015, 5). Traditional transmission-based approaches to CPD expect teachers to receive new ideas from an external expert through workshops, courses or similar activities and directly implement them in their classrooms so that the quality of instruction can be improved. Though some of these types of activities might help teachers develop knowledge considerably, the impact they have on teachers' beliefs and classroom practices is believed to be very limited (Borg 2015). Therefore, approaches enabling teachers to become reflective practitioners and, in turn, change their beliefs and practices to improve the quality of student learning have recently been given considerable attention.

In this paper, I describe how I engaged a group of teachers in Lesson Study (LS), a form of teacher professional development, in an ELT context in Turkey and supported them throughout the entire process. I further share the reflections of those teachers on this process. The project reported here is a pilot application of this form of CPD - LS - which has been conducted under the support and guidance of the Lesson Study Research Group (LSRG) at the School of Education at the University of Leicester in the UK.

What is Lesson Study?

LS is defined as 'a highly specified form of classroom action research focusing on the development of teacher practice knowledge' (Dudley 2014, 1). It has been practised, predominantly in mainstream education, in Japan for over a century; however, it has gained popularity outside this country only relatively recently. In LS, teachers go through a process or cycle in which they collaboratively plan, teach, observe and analyse teaching and learning in 'research lessons' (Dudley 2014). This cycle offers opportunities to share subject knowledge, improve teaching skills, and has the potential to challenge beliefs that directly influence the way teachers teach. In addition, LS fosters an environment in which teachers continually give constructive feedback to each other to improve their practice. 'A Lesson Study consists of a cycle of at least three 'research lessons' that are jointly planned, taught/observed and analysed by a LS group' (Dudley 2014, 5). (See Figure 1 below)

Figure 1: Lesson Study Process by Dudley (2014)



The study

The Context for the Study

The setting for this study is an English preparatory school within a university located in Izmir, Turkey. The school provides an intensive English language programme consisting of four modules based on CEFR levels (A1, A2, B1 and B2), each of which lasts eight weeks. The main aim of the programme is to bring students, aged between 18 and 21, to the desired level (B2) before starting their majors. The school currently has sixty-four teachers and seven hundred and fifty students in total. It provides twenty-eight hours of lessons a week in each module and each teacher teaches between twenty-two to twenty-five hours per week.

Fourteen teachers adopted LS after its initial introduction at the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year. Those teachers had differing amounts of teaching experience and qualifications: besides relevant BA degrees, four were CELTA and one DELTA-qualified, while two had MAs. I acted as a mentor and a 'more knowledgeable other (MKO)' (Vygotsky 1930/1978) throughout the process. Through negotiations, the teachers and I first created a schedule to follow throughout the year. As the final step in the schedule, all LS groups presented and shared their experiences and findings with a wider audience at the 'Teachers Research!' IATEFL Research Special Interest Group, Annual International Conference and 5th Gediz University Annual Teacher Research Conference, in Izmir, Turkey on 18-19 June 2015. They also plan to

publish their papers as part of the conference proceedings.

Data collection

The aim of this study is to find out how LS was integrated into this context and what the initial reactions of the teachers were to this form of CPD. The study is qualitative, exploratory and inductive in design (Heigham & Croker 2009). In order to obtain data, I participated in all the observations and meetings teachers conducted as part of the LS cycles, even though it was a time-consuming and daunting process. In addition to the observations, a series of interviews were carried out with the teachers before, while and after the process. Finally, I participated in their presentations at the conference to see the outcomes closely. As I read through the transcripts from the interviews, I categorised the emergent themes and made sense of them with the help of my observations and the teachers' confirmations. It was an advantage for me to take an active part in the project in this sense.

Findings

Teachers' Perspectives on Lesson Study Process Benefits

The majority of the teachers involved in the LS research project stated that the process shifted their focus from teaching to learning. They pointed out that LS helped them observe and better understand student learning. Moreover, they said that this process showed them ways of improving learning in their classrooms.

T3: LS is a quick reminder of the main target which is obviously learning.

T6: *For me, the best thing about LS is that teachers try to understand the students' learning, what kinds of activities help them learn better, what kinds of difficulties they may encounter.*

T10: *It gave us different ideas about how we can improve learning in the classroom.*

Some of them said that LS improved their own learning as a teacher. They think that they developed their teaching skills thanks to this approach.

T12: *(LS is) a wonderful way of learning for teachers. It is a great opportunity for us to observe classroom dynamics in a very different way.*

T9: *To prepare your research lesson, you need to read, think and write a lot. Therefore, it helps our own learning.*

The teachers also emphasised that they benefitted a lot from working collaboratively and sharing ideas. They think that the process helped them learn from each other.

T2: *The collaborative planning and discussions help us learn from each other.*

T7: *Sharing our knowledge with each other makes us more knowledgeable. We can learn new teaching techniques from our colleagues.*

Some of the teachers mentioned that the LS process made them feel more confident as a teacher and gave them opportunities to try new ideas out and see the immediate results.

T1: *I became more encouraged to try new stuff, apply and see the results with other teachers and actually had some very beneficial results, and fun as well.*

One of the teachers wrote that s/he improved herself/himself in terms of observation skills.

T5: *Learning how to do observation is a good side of LS. We need to focus on some students in the class and observe them carefully. Normally, I am not good at observing people for a long time. However, I am improving myself and I can focus on people's attitudes now.*

In addition, the teachers said that the student interviews and the post-observation meetings to review the lesson plans were quite useful for them to adjust the lessons according to the needs of students.

T4: *Student interviews enabled us to see the lessons from the students' perspective. This helped us better cater for their needs.*

T14: *Revising the lesson to meet the needs of students at different ability levels and seeing how minor changes in the lesson plan can affect students positively or negatively (was beneficial).*

Finally, after presenting at the IATEFL ReSIG Annual International Conference and 5th Gediz University Annual Teacher Research Conference in Izmir, the teachers stated that they felt very accomplished and appreciated. They also mentioned that all their efforts turned out to be something fruitful and rewarding, which made them feel encouraged to continue their professional development without any obligation in the future years.

T4: *It was very surprising to see people very interested in a study I conducted for the purpose of my own professional development. I felt myself to be more useful and inspiring.*

T8: *When preparing for our presentations, we looked back at the process we had been through. I think this increased our self-awareness of our own professional development. We noticed that we learnt many useful things not only from each other but also from external sources.*

T11: *Sharing our experiences and the findings of our study at an international conference gave us a great satisfaction. We felt fully accomplished. The audience showed big interest in our topic and they asked a lot of questions, which was exciting. I would like to experience this again and again.*

It can be clearly understood from these teachers' comments that creating opportunities for them to share their experiences and findings with a wider audience can be an enormous contribution to their professional development and its sustainability.

Challenges

The teachers also reported the difficulties they faced throughout the process. However, the majority of these were related to time. All teachers have very tight teaching schedules in this context and they would like to have had more space and flexibility to carry out these kinds of professional development activities.

T12: *Only our busy schedules limited our group discussion sessions unfortunately. They could've been longer and more detailed.*

T3: *Sometimes we do not have enough time to plan our lesson and do post-discussion. We need to finish everything in a hurry.*

The instructors believe that they could do a better job and in turn benefit more if they were provided more flexibility in terms of time.

T9: *There are not many problems arising from the nature of lesson study but time management and the arrangement of meetings and the collected data require a meticulous prior planning.*

T5: *I think it would be nice to have more time to talk as a team right after a lesson. This was not possible since everyone has a busy schedule.*

In short, the teachers reported not having experienced any problems in relation to the LS procedures; however, their busy schedules constrained their ability to work more intensely.

Conclusion

This project was intended as a trial to use LS to critically investigate its applicability in this ELT context. Apart from time constraints, the teachers involved in this project reported positive outcomes:

- (1) A shift in focus from teaching to learning, which helped teachers gain insight into the nature of learning
- (2) A significant contribution to the teachers' professional learning
- (3) Learning from each other and sharing ideas whilst working collaboratively
- (4) Confidence-building, motivation and encouragement for trying out new things
- (5) Addressing students' needs more effectively

These findings suggest that LS has potential as a vehicle for the professional development of ELT teachers in this teaching context. However, its application requires that certain conditions and support are provided for teachers, for example time and management support.

On the other hand, this small-scale study draws mostly on the researcher's observations and interviews with the teachers engaged in LS as part of their CPD in one particular ELT context. Therefore, it might be wise to be cautious about generalising beyond the context examined in this study. Besides, it is recommended that future research can aim to explore LS's impact and its sustainability in this and other ELT contexts through a more longitudinal and comprehensive study.

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Interview

Learning beyond the classroom: a research agenda

Hayo Reinders talks with Ana Ines Salvi



Dr. Hayo Reinders (www.innovationinteaching.org) is Professor of Education and Head of Department at Unitec in New Zealand and Dean of the Graduate School at Anaheim University in the United States. He is also Editor-in-Chief of the journal 'Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching'. His most recent books are on teaching methodologies, digital games, and second language acquisition. He edits a book series on 'New Language Learning and Teaching Environments' for Palgrave Macmillan.

Ana: Hayo, you recently gave a plenary speech entitled 'Learning beyond the classroom: a research agenda'. This was at *The Self in Language Learning (SiLL)* International Conference (17-19 September, 2015) at Çag University in Turkey. Can you tell us a bit more about it? What does this research agenda involve?

Hayo: *The rationale for the talk – and much of my research – is that most language learning happens outside of the classroom. Our learners are first and foremost individuals with rich lives and many connections; the classroom is only one setting in an interconnected web of learning environments. I deliberately titled the talk 'learning beyond the classroom', as opposed to 'learners beyond the classroom' because we don't stop learning when we are not formally learners. In fact, many people learn many things (not just languages) all the time without ever referring to themselves as learners. I am interested in how people learn outside of the 60 or 90 minutes per week that they are in our classes. It is remarkable how little research there is in this area.*

Ana: Can you tell us about the contexts where you teach/ research? Have you been working with students, teachers, or/and teacher-researchers?

Hayo: *Most of my language teaching has been outside of the language classroom. I started off teaching Dutch as second language to refugees and teaching Arabic to Dutch learners in one-on-one settings. Most of my subsequent 'teaching' has been in self-access and language advising contexts, and in recent years mostly through online language support. My research is predominantly on out-of-class experiences. This type of research often involves long-term and quite close collaboration with people who become, rather than 'subjects', active participants in the research and who shape the outcomes to a degree. Not all of them are interested in the academic side of the research process (and those who are usually become co-authors), but all are interested in having a say in how the results are shared. As academics I think we are increasingly expected to show the value in what we do, and one of the best ways to do this is to involve our communities in our research, both in terms of choosing the challenges we tackle, as well as in the ways we disseminate our findings. Social media has done a lot to open the relatively closed world of academia and to encourage researchers to engage with multiple audiences, in different ways.*

Ana: What approaches are there to investigating what happens beyond the classroom?

Hayo: *I think broadly there are two ways of tackling the challenge of uncovering the often invisible experiences outside the classroom; through deep and prolonged interaction with small numbers of learners, and, promisingly, through the gathering and analysing of huge amounts of data that we increasingly have access to.*

Ana: Can you give us some examples of how you would go about this and the types of instruments you would use?

Hayo: *As for the kinds of deep and prolonged explorations I mentioned, these really involve understanding the whole person and their lifewide experiences. This obviously goes beyond a person's experience in one location (e.g. a classroom) and at one time (e.g. during a test) but instead looks at all the different elements that make up the wonderfully complex mosaic that is someone's lived and felt experience. I call this the 'head and heart' type of research. Questions that arise from this include how people deal with a disappointing conversation in which they couldn't get their meaning across, what excites them about learning a language, who they use the language with, where and how, and so on. Learning diaries, stimulated recall sessions, critical incident analysis, ethnographic descriptions and many other, often qualitative, tools can help with this type of research. As for the emerging potential of data in language learning research, the challenge is to capture*

and make sense of the vast amounts of information that can now be recorded. I have experimented with technology in this space, from (early on) using mobile phones for recording of learning experiences, to reality mining, in which as much as possible of someone's interaction with the language is recorded. I like the Kapture, a wristwatch type device that audiorecords everything, 24 hours a day, deletes everything after two minutes, except when the user taps the device twice, in which case the last couple of recorded minutes are stored. I use this to record instances where people notice something about the language, or when they experience something that they feel is important for their learning (positive or negative). Ambient computing and the internet of things are also very exciting as they allow us to capture information about how people interact with objects and people in different spaces. I use haptic feedback (through a wearable device that vibrates at certain time) for aural input enhancement for example, and Arduino Lily pads (small wearable sensors that can be sewn into one's clothing) to trigger language samples to be sent to the learner's cellphone as they interact with objects. The possibilities for supporting learning outside the classroom, and for investigating what the language acquisition process is really like, are only just starting to be explored.

Ana: I am aware that one of your research interests is in digital games. What kind of games do students use and how can they be deployed as research tools?

Hayo: I find games hugely rewarding spaces to observe learning. For many learners games provide a familiar and motivating environment in which they can – often for the first time in their language learning experience – relax and enjoy learning through interacting with other players, as anonymously (or not) as they wish. In this way, games offer a wonderful window into the ways in

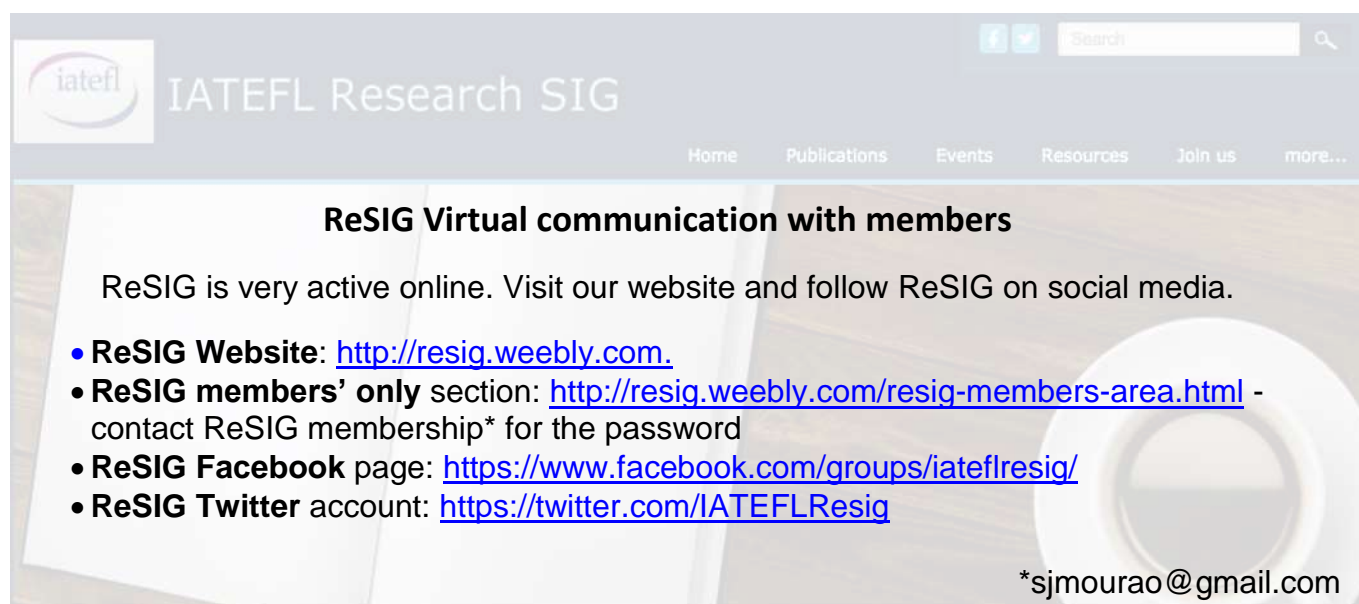
which language develops, often over long periods of time. As language use takes place in the digital domain, chat transcripts, coupled with logs of actions within the game, are easily available for analysis. Games are therefore a great tool for language research, even for those not interested in gameplay itself

Ana: What kind of questions did your talk trigger among the participants in your talk?

Hayo: The questions were about the practicalities of how we actually use digital technologies to investigate what happens beyond the classroom, and about ethical, privacy and security considerations. For example, how do you go about safely involving children in online activities, and what are the ethical challenges in reality mining research where someone's actions and language may be recorded in the private sphere and over long periods of time? Other questions related to challenges in finding opportunities for out-of-class language learning in EFL settings. Interestingly, no one questioned the need for doing so, or for conducting research on such learning!

Ana: What's next?

Hayo: I think we are at one of the most exciting times in the history of education (not just language education) where we are seeing a shift from quite specific and often limiting kinds of formal learning at set times and in certain locations to a much wider range of opportunities for learning (and supporting learning). More people will be coming online in the next few years than ever before and more people will thus get access to learning opportunities than ever before. The challenge for us as educators and researchers is to figure out how to best prepare ourselves for supporting the arrival of hundreds of millions of new learners into our world.



The screenshot shows the IATEFL Research SIG website. The header includes the IATEFL logo, the text "IATEFL Research SIG", and navigation links: Home, Publications, Events, Resources, Join us, and more... There is also a search bar. The main content area is titled "ReSIG Virtual communication with members". Below this title, it says "ReSIG is very active online. Visit our website and follow ReSIG on social media." followed by a list of links:

- **ReSIG Website:** <http://resig.weebly.com>.
- **ReSIG members' only** section: <http://resig.weebly.com/resig-members-area.html> - contact ReSIG membership* for the password
- **ReSIG Facebook** page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/iateflresig/>
- **ReSIG Twitter** account: <https://twitter.com/IATEFLResig>

At the bottom right, the email address *sjmourao@gmail.com is displayed.

Researching professional development with the use of narrative enquiry

Volha Arkhipenka

Introduction

Following its emergence in the mid-1980s, narrative inquiry has become an established, though diverse, approach to research. Today, narrative inquiry is widely used by researchers from across social sciences, including education and TESOL. In this paper, I will briefly introduce narrative inquiry, share how I research professional development using it and reflect on what I have learned so far through this process. This paper is based on my presentation at the 49th IATEFL Conference in Manchester in April 2015.

Narrative inquiry: What is it?

Narrative inquiry is usually defined as a particular subtype of qualitative research methodology, even though the possibility for quantitative narrative inquiry has been discussed in the literature (Elliot, 2005). In its essence, narrative inquiry is an inquiry into a phenomenon through focusing on narratives, or stories. What is meant here are not fictional stories but rather stories of personal experience. The assumption is that we are a storytelling species: we understand ourselves, the world around us and our experiences through telling stories. As Polkinghorne (1988, p. 13), one of the pioneers of narrative inquiry, explains, "Narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite".

The common argument of narrative inquirers then is that "if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17). Together with this, the ways with which individual narrative inquirers bring this argument to life vary (see Riessman, 2008 for examples). Thus the story that follows of narrative inquiry within my ongoing PhD research should not be seen as a prescription of the right way to do narrative inquiry but rather as a practical example of one of many possible ways of engaging with this approach.

The story of my research into stories

Within my ongoing PhD research, I am investigating the professional development of English language teachers

on an MA TESOL programme. The programme in focus is a one-year, full-time, on-site MA, located at the University of Manchester. My aim is to better understand professional development based on how teachers talk about their experience of life and development within the timeframe of the programme. It was this aim that made me turn to narrative inquiry: I needed a theoretical framework and methodological tools suitable for dealing with people talking about their experience. This was in early 2014.

After a phase of planning, piloting, and getting ethical approval, I started to generate data in September 2014 when the new academic year began. One day while still in the first week of the programme, I attended one of the MA TESOL classes. Having agreed with the tutor in advance, I gave a short presentation introducing myself and my research. I then distributed participant information sheets inviting volunteers to take part in my research. Within the next few weeks, I received seven positive replies: from three female and four male students of four different nationalities.

Figure 1 below summarizes in graphic form what happened next and what is still to happen.

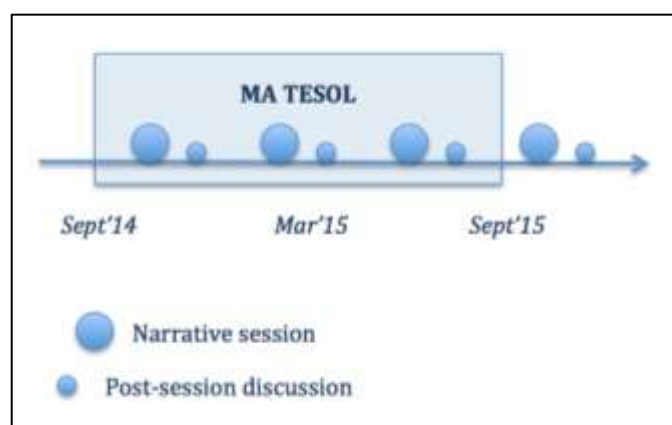


Figure 1: A graphic summary of my data generation process

In October 2014, I met individually with my participants for a narrative session (indicated in Figure 1 with the first big circle). The narrative sessions were biographical in nature and aimed to get to know the teachers and to begin rapport building. I started the sessions with an open-ended question: "So, how are you doing these days?", which served as a prompt to explore their current experience. We then moved onto the participants' past and explored their background, decision to become an English language teacher, their career up to starting the MA TESOL and their decision to undertake this degree. We finished off with a discussion around their aspirations for the future. This produced extended story-like accounts in all cases. With permission from the participants, I audio recorded all the seven narrative sessions. I then transcribed the audio recordings and sent them to the participants, with

the request that they read their transcript and think whether it had captured what they wanted to say at the time of the narrative session and whether anything had changed since then. In a way, this process resembled member checking (Stake, 1995, pp. 115–116), even though there were some important differences: I shared the transcripts, not the final report, and my main objective was not to verify but to prompt further reflection.

To capture such further reflection, I met again with the participants for post-session discussions. This happened in November 2014 (indicated in Figure 1 with the first small circle). The post-session discussions followed a similar format to that of the narrative sessions. They were individual, held in the same place and audio recorded. This time, though, the discussion was structured around the transcripts. This enabled a filling in of any gaps in the stories that had emerged during the narrative sessions, as well as providing a fresh perspective on the stories. Moreover, the post-session discussions complemented the narrative sessions with the addition of new stories of the participants' current experience, which might never have been shared had I waited longer for the next meeting, or omitted this step in my research plan.

Time passed and the participants lived through the stressful time of assignment writing. In February 2015, after they had submitted their assignments and started the second semester, we met again for the second narrative session (indicated in Figure 1 with the second big circle). Having covered the bigger picture of their lives in the first round of data generation, we now focused on their current experience and any reflections they might have had on their own professional development. I opened up the conversation with the question "So, what have you been doing since we last met?" and then was as responsive as I could be to their replies. These narrative sessions were transcribed and returned to the participants as before and complemented by the post-session discussions (indicated in Figure 1 with the second small circle).

Two more rounds of data generation are still to come: one in the summer of 2015, during the dissertation stage, and one in the autumn of 2015, immediately after finishing the programme (indicated in Figure 1 with the third and fourth big and small circles). Being in the middle of the data generation process, I believe this is a good time to pause and reflect on what I have learned so far from using narrative inquiry to research professional development.

Reflections on using narrative inquiry to research professional development

First of all, looking at the data that I already have in hand, I feel that narrative inquiry has served the purpose of my research well. During the narrative sessions and post-session discussions, my participants

told many stories that were rich in details with regard to what they were doing, thinking and feeling over the year of MA in TESOL. These details might never have emerged had I just had a pre-determined list of questions requiring direct answers. For example, had I not been prepared to hear stories, I might have never realized that working at a local restaurant could be linked to a teacher's professional development. However, for Carol (all the names are pseudonyms), a Chinese teacher with a strong belief in the importance of getting students interested and motivated, such a link does exist. For her, working at the restaurant is a chance to get to know the local life. She hopes that in the future she will be able to share this experience with her students and this will have a positive effect on their interest and motivation. Having details in my data like this makes me hopeful that I will indeed get a better understanding of professional development, which is the aim of my research.

Together with this, seeing how rich my data are has made me more aware than ever of the ethical issues involved in doing narrative inquiry (Josselson, 2007). My participants have entrusted me with their stories, and it is now my responsibility to take good care of what I have been entrusted with. This will involve finding a way of staying loyal to both my participants and the world of academia. I will need to strike a balance between being honest and transparent about what I did and what I found, on one hand, and protecting my participants' identities and being sensitive to how they might feel reading what I have written about them, on the other. As Geertz (1988, p. 131, cited in Josselson 2007, p.537) says, "What once had seemed only technically difficult, getting 'their' lives into 'our' works, has turned, morally, politically, even epistemologically delicate", and this is precisely how I feel.

Looking through the data, I also realize that the narrative sessions and post-session discussions were not just encounters for my participants to talk about their development, they were a source of development for them. Johnson and Golombek (2011) suggest that narrating their experience helps teachers to externalize their understandings and beliefs and to systematically examine themselves, their practices and the contexts of their work. This resonates with a postmodern conception of the qualitative research interview as a construction site of knowledge (Kvale, 2007, p. 21). Within this research, the participants noticed themselves that they were benefiting from sharing their experience. They appreciated in particular the opportunity to read the transcripts. Beatrice, a Chinese teacher dissatisfied with traditional teaching and the exam-oriented system in her teaching context, commented that reading the transcripts was like reading her own diary – it helped her to clarify her thoughts; and Zulkani, an Indonesian teacher keen on introducing technology into English language teaching, said that

reading the transcripts helped him to understand his own situation better.

Finally, as I was contemplating my participants' stories, memories of my own teaching started to emerge and I found myself problematizing what I used to see as unproblematic. For example, I never doubted the need for a course book. I always used one to teach my students or to learn foreign languages myself and it seemed to work well. However, when I heard Tom, a Chinese teacher fascinated with languages and language acquisition, telling a story of how he learned to speak Japanese without a course book, I started to question myself. Today, I do still believe that course books are useful but I am more explicit about my belief and the reasons for holding it. In other words, this experience has been a source of professional development for me as well - not only as a researcher but also as a teacher. After all, raising the tacit practical knowledge gained from experience to the surface is an important part of developing expertise (Tsui, 2003).

Conclusion

To summarize, narrative inquiry is a promising approach to research, and it seems to suit researching professional development particularly well. Being just in the middle of the data generation process, I can already see it bringing about insights, which I believe will be helpful for better understanding professional development. Moreover, the approach in itself seems to be a source of professional development for both the participants and the researcher. This makes the approach even more attractive.

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Creativity in ELT Research

Mehvish Saleem, Katja Težak, Sarah Mercer & Daniel Xerri

Introduction

In this short article, we argue that creativity is a characteristic of being a good ELT researcher. We suggest that there is much overlap in the skills and knowledge required to research well and those of a creative thinker. Consequently, we propose that research training courses could explicitly promote and enhance participants' creative thinking skills as part of their programmes.

Defining creativity

Creativity is a highly popular term in contemporary educational discourse, featuring in countless policy documents and programmes (Sharp & Le Métails, 2000). In many contexts, there seems to be an agreement that education should serve the purpose of fostering young people's creativity. Hence, curricula often cite creative skills as desirable objectives (Heilmann & Korte, 2010). However, despite the fact that creativity has recently become an educational buzzword, there remain a number of misconceptions about what creativity actually is.

One misconception concerns how creativity is defined. In lay terms, people often associate it merely with arts and crafts, limiting its definition to only such forms of output. Equally problematic are definitions, which are too broadly all-encompassing viewing every form of educational endeavour as creative. Despite these problems, there have been a number of attempts to identify the defining qualities of creativity (see, e.g., Batey & Furnham, 2006; Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow, 2004). In their review of definitions of creativity from the 1800s onwards, Runco and Jaeger (2012) conclude that, "the standard definition is bipartite: Creativity requires both originality and effectiveness" (p. 92). Here originality is often conceptualised as being associated with novelty, unusualness, or uniqueness, while effectiveness might entail usefulness, appropriateness, or value.

This bipartite definition of creativity can be extended even further by means of Rhodes's (1987) 4Ps approach, which refers to the four areas to which this definition of creativity relates: the *person* who acts as a creator, the cognitive *processes* at play during creation, the *press* or environmental influences in operation, and the created *product*. In other words, "Creativity is the interaction among *aptitude*, *process* and *environment*

by which an individual or group produces a *perceptible product* that is both *novel* and *useful* as defined within a *social context*" (Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow, 2004, p. 90). For the purposes of this article, we will define creativity as being a set of complex cognitive process, which involves identifying and solving a problem through a myriad of intertwined thought processes in order to produce something new, surprising and useful and/or valuable.

Since it is our goal to explore the similarities between the activity of research and creativity as a skill set, we also want to take a closer look at the typical stages within a creative process. A basic four-stage model of the creative process was developed by Wallas (1926) and contains the stages of *preparation*, *incubation*, *illumination*, and *verification*. Many later models are based on this (e.g., Amabile, 1996; Busse & Mansfield, 1980; Cagle, 1985), and the four stages remain at the core of all the models. *Preparation* involves a preliminary analysis and the defining of the problem. The *incubation* stage involves active cognitive work on the problem as well as a passive subconscious formation of connections and associations. In the *illumination* phase, a possible solution or solutions are formulated, and, in the last phase of *verification*, these possible solutions are examined more closely and evaluated to assess their adequacy for the task at hand (Lubart, 2001). Reflecting on these phases, the connections between creativity and research processes start to emerge more clearly. Most research projects involve finding and defining a problem or puzzle. This stage is typically accompanied by and followed by the processes of expanding one's knowledge about the topic and thinking more deeply about it. The aim of research is then to actively search for possible connections and answers to our questions. Research design helps to find answers to research questions – a process which may take a lot of time and reflection considering the suitability and usefulness of the design for the aims of the study. Finally, we evaluate our ideas, thinking, research design and possible answers to our questions, assessing whether they seem appropriate for the context and questions and whether they offer original, new insights to the topic under investigation.

Characteristics of good research

As O'Leary (2004) explains, all good research is a "thinking person's game [...] a creative and strategic process that involves constantly assessing, reassessing, and making decisions about the best possible means for obtaining trustworthy information, carrying out appropriate analysis, and drawing credible conclusions" (p. 2). Both research and creativity involve assessing and reassessing, going backwards and forwards, reshaping ideas until a novel and useful solution is found. In this article for the ease of writing, we discuss research from a very linear perspective but acknowledge that in reality and in creative terms, this process is likely to be more cyclic in nature.

Considering in a little more detail the typical stages of a research project, it often begins with generating original questions worth asking or puzzles worth reflecting upon. This can be thought of as a parallel to the first of the four-stage model of creative process (i.e., preparation) outlined in section 2. Researchers might gain ideas from reviewing the literature or noticing contradictions or puzzles in their language teaching practice. The development of research ideas requires us to look at the familiar from different perspectives, thinking of useful ways forward and considering original perspectives on the topic.

Once the focus of the study has been chosen, the next stage is typically to design the study in a way that offers the most likely and best method of generating data to answer specific questions or to cast light on puzzling issues. In creativity terms, this could be thought of as the incubation stage. It requires time and reflective thinking to develop an effective and appropriate research methodology. During this stage, researchers also need to consider carefully the ethical dilemmas posed by their study. This needs researchers to spend time reflecting deeply on participants' perspectives, considering how they may be affected by the research approach, tools, methods, and questions, and what they gain from the experience.

Though the methodology may vary in each study, its credibility relies upon its 1) ability to address the questions, 2) suitability for the researcher, and 3) availability of time, resources, and necessary ethical approvals needed to conduct research (O'Leary, 2004). Such design requirements do not limit creativity, but rather they serve as a framework for exploring a range of methods that are "imaginative yet focused, intuitive yet logical, flexible yet methodical, ingenious yet practical" (ibid, p. 101). Here again, creativity plays a central role in ensuring that the research meets all of these challenges, considers the multiple perspectives and yet is open to fresh thinking that meets the design needs and questions of the study.

When it comes to data analysis, creative thinking is again vital for the researcher. Analysis begins with the researcher looking at raw data seeking to make meaningful interpretations. This can be thought of as the illumination phase in which the researcher incorporates their knowledge as well as their creative thinking skills to assess the significance of the findings or discover themes as well as consider absences, all the while remaining open to finding the unexpected or the seemingly inexplicable.

Another key stage where creativity has a role to play is in the sharing of research in which researchers disseminate the findings, insights, and shortcomings of their study and reflect on implications for practice and future research. Sharing is a creative act that necessitates researchers to imagine their audience,

consider how best to articulate and communicate an original message that is useful for the intended audience. The verification phase of the creative process model can be thought of as including an open, in-depth, and reflective account of the research processes in which the final output is made comprehensible for and accessible to public evaluation.

Implications for practice

In this article, we have suggested that creativity is an important characteristic of good empirical studies and can help researchers to produce original research of value to the wider community. Useful suggestions for promoting creativity can be found in the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. His work offers many rich insights but for the purposes of this article, we have chosen to focus on three key ideas that could be actively incorporated into researcher training and development. The first is, "Try to be surprised by something every day" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 347). Csikszentmihalyi suggests that in our adult lives we stop being surprised or intrigued by things that we see every day or that we perceive as ordinary. As researchers, we need to develop a creative disposition with a view to questioning the familiar and looking at every day events in the teaching and learning context so as to expose anomalies, puzzles or questions we wish to investigate or better understand. To generate new and original insights, we need to retain the ability to be amazed, see things afresh and to not take anything for granted.

In a similar vein, the second suggestion we can work with is, "When something strikes a spark of interest, follow it" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 348). When we find something that intrigues us or makes us wonder, we should hold on to it and try to develop our thinking about this. It might be some aspect of teaching and learning or something we come across in our reading or something we notice in our data. Making memos or keeping a research journal is a powerful way of following up our intuitions and interesting leads, ensuring our mind explores all avenues, and our thinking remains open.

Another key suggestion believed to promote creativity is, "Make time for reflection and relaxation" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 353). In order to enable our brain to think most effectively and creatively, we need to plan in rest and time away from our computers, data and classrooms. Not focusing on a problem or challenge for a while and engaging wholeheartedly in another relaxing and fun activity can free our minds and enable us to contemplate fresh ideas, new perspectives, and alternative viewpoints. Quite literally, a change of environment can alter our perspectives, helping us to see the world from another point of view.

In terms of generating ideas about what to research, how to research, or how to analyse and interpret the data, Csikszentmihalyi (2009) suggests that we should

look at problems from as many different viewpoints as possible, generate as many ideas as possible, and attempt to produce unlikely ideas (pp. 365-369). If we can manage to look at our research from as many viewpoints as possible, we increase our chances of finding new perspectives, seeing things we had become blind to, questioning our assumptions and opening our mind to alternative ways of doing research, and thinking, talking or writing about our questions or puzzles. There are many more recommendations on increasing creativity by Csikszentmihalyi in his work, and they have been used and discussed in a variety of fields such as preparing online learning activities (Muirhead, 2007) or discussing the benefits of increasing domain-specific knowledge (Sternberg, 1998); however, given space limitations, we selected only the above as they seemed to resonate strongest with the process of research.

Conclusion

There is much more that is yet to be explored about the concept of creativity in research processes. However, we hope that our first attempt at thinking explicitly about research in ELT from a creativity perspective illustrates the rich potential that we feel this line of thinking may offer. We conclude that training novice researchers in activities and strategies believed to foster creative thinking would add a valuable set of skills to their toolkit as empirical researchers. As O'Leary (2004, p. 1) explains it is not sufficient to know about methods to be an effective researcher, you must without a doubt "creatively and strategically 'think' your way through the whole process".

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Book Review

**Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2013).
Successful Qualitative Research: A
practical guide for beginners.
Los Angeles: Sage.**

During the last decades, qualitative research has experienced increased acceptance in academia, and it has become a very popular approach not only amongst students and academics of various research fields but also amongst practitioner researchers who want to inform their own practices and contribute to the field of teaching methodology. Through the lens of qualitative research a different perspective on learning and teaching becomes possible and a deeper understanding of the individual processes involved might be fostered.

Braun and Clarke's practical guide is a very comprehensive publication about qualitative research methodology since the authors decided for a hands-on and learning-by-doing approach for their book. This guide can be used by academic researchers as well as by teacher-researchers, amongst others, for the purpose of supervision as well as support, and can help the former and the latter to navigate successfully from planning to presenting the results of a research project. It reads like a step-by-step guide that can also function as a companion to consult when in need for quick answers.

Braun and Clarke's practical guide is divided into 13 chapters, arranged into 4 sections which are successfully (1) getting started in qualitative research, (2) collecting qualitative data, (3) analyzing qualitative data, and (4) completing qualitative research. These sections lead the reader from the planning stages to the final version of a research paper, a research report or an oral presentation. The 13 chapters are themselves broken down into sub-sections, which make it easy for the reader to find particular information if one does not want to read the book cover to cover. In addition, every chapter offers suggestions for additional readings as well as discussion questions, making the book suitable for use in research methodology seminars at universities. In addition, references to an online companion website offering a great variety of supplementary material for each chapter can be found throughout the book.

Section 1: Successfully getting started in qualitative research (Chapters 1-3)

First, basic information about qualitative research in chapters 1 and 2 helps to clarify the term and the contexts suitable for this type of research. Next, in chapter 3, planning and designing a qualitative research

project are discussed. The fact that a full chapter is devoted to the planning and designing stages of a research project seems to be particularly useful for early-stage researchers since these may facilitate all the data collection, the data analysis, and the dissemination phases.

Section 2: Successfully collecting qualitative data (Chapters 4-6)

Section 2 discusses the data collection process. The focus lies on interviews as tools for data collection as the authors argue that this is the most common way to collect data in qualitative research. However, even if the scope of data collection techniques covered is rather limited, the section is comprehensive in tackling a large range of topics and questions that might arise when planning to conduct interviews such as developing an interview-guide, finding the right location for the interview, finding participants, and dealing with interviews that failed. Alternative ways to gather qualitative data such as surveys, story-completion tasks, narratives, diaries or pre-existing data receive attention in chapter 6.

Section 3: Successfully analyzing qualitative data (Chapters 7-11)

Section 3 focuses on three basic forms of data analysis which are searching for *patterns*, looking at *interaction*, and looking at *stories*, with a clear preference for pattern-based analysis. The authors explicitly state that they will focus on methods for data analysis that are most likely to be used and applied by emerging researchers. More complex and advanced techniques are only touched upon in brief. However, further readings are suggested which offer the reader the opportunity to delve deeper into one particular data analysis option if needed.

Chapter 7 introduces the reader to audio transcriptions as one of the preparatory steps towards data analysis. Data analysis itself is then introduced in chapter 8 where the different ways of data analysis are highlighted in more detail. The authors highlight that the key to successful qualitative data analysis is "[...] analytic sensibility [...]" (pp.201-202) which according to Braun and Clarke means "[...] interpreting data through the particular theoretical lens of your chosen method" (pp.201-202). Unfortunately, this caveat only comes in chapter 9, rather than at the start of section 3. Strategically, it would have been perhaps better to start section 3 with this chapter and then move on to the explanation of the different approaches to data analysis.

Chapters 10 and 11 focus on the concluding steps of data analysis: pattern identification as done in thematic analysis (other approaches, such as pattern identification in Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis or Grounded Theory are only touched upon briefly for comparative purposes) and the processes of analyzing

and interpreting the patterns. By providing concrete examples, the authors are able to guide the reader towards understanding how to analyse and interpret qualitative data and what one has to consider during this stage of a research project.

Section 3 is very useful for the less experienced researchers since the authors point out shortcomings, difficulties, problems and obstacles as well as traps one might encounter during data analysis. However, I found it rather difficult to comprehend phrases such as “*read data as data*” (p.205, emphasis in original) or “*read[ing] the words actively, analytically and critically, [...] think about what the data mean*” (p.205, emphasis in original). Even if there are some model questions to be considered when approaching the data analysis stage (c.f. Chapter 9), it is quite difficult to understand how you do this. Essentially, for me, this section seems to be the most difficult and complicated one to read. Especially chapter 9 needs time to be read, reflected upon and understood. The samples provided in Chapters 9, 10 and 11 to illustrate the different ways to code are helpful even if the reader has to flip back and forth between the samples and the explanatory text. Despite this, the samples and the coding examples help the reader understand what coding can look like and how it can be done.

Section 4: Successfully completing qualitative research (Chapters 12-13)

The final section of the book, section 4, provides final tips, tricks and how-to-dos in terms of completing a research project successfully – no matter whether it is an MA thesis, a PhD project, an article for a scientific journal or a research report that might have an impact on your personal (classroom) practice. Chapter 12 discusses how to write a conclusion effectively and how quality criteria - reliability, generalizability and validity - are defined in the qualitative research paradigm. Chapter 13 provides useful information for writing and editing your final draft. The media of dissemination discussed range from research reports to oral presentations; the latter might most likely be the key source for disseminating research results for researchers whose goal is not to work for academic output but rather to have an impact on (classroom) practice.

Conclusion

In sum, this book tries to raise awareness of what works in qualitative research and how to do it offering toolboxes of tips and tricks for every stage of a research project. The use of concrete material helps to foster a reflective process about one's own project, data and research plan, or alternatively, helps illustrate how it could be done. At the same time, the authors try to be as objective as possible by pointing out advantages and disadvantages alike so that the reader does not feel forced to use one particular approach towards qualitative research.

The fact that the book is designed to be a practical hands-on-guide seems to be particularly helpful if one can already work with actual data so that what is read can directly be applied to the set of data available emphasizing the learning-by-doing approach as announced in the first chapters of the book. Another important key focus in this book – supported by concrete examples from the authors' own research - is elucidating the key principle of qualitative, empirical research, which is understanding.

Therefore, it seems handy to me to have this book right beside your desk so that you can check and consult while working and whenever you feel the need for research guidance. Information about further readings and the data provided on the companion website can help you check if you are on the right track or not. Even if the authors do not intend the book to be followed like a step-by-step guide, it does offer you some security and support when conducting your own qualitative research, especially if you lack access to other forms of guidance or input. Therefore, I would recommend this book to students and teacher-researchers alike. Since I am reviewing it from the perspective of a part-time PhD student who is working full-time, I could see this book becoming a useful companion, especially to those researchers whose goal is not to contribute to academic output but rather to their field of expertise such as language teaching practice.

Biodata

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Understanding EFL students' attitudes towards English teaching and learning: an example from Taiwan

Yi-Mei (Tina) Chen

Introduction

Communicative approaches (CLT and TBLT) are often considered inappropriate in EFL contexts for contextual reasons including learners' attitudes (Walsh & Wyatt, 2014). This paper aims to explore learners' attitudes in a Taiwanese secondary school, an EFL context. These were investigated through an action research project with a main aim to promote teachers' knowledge growth in communicative approaches. Learners' views were also investigated for the following reasons. Firstly, students should be the subjects in classroom; thus, it is important for teachers to understand their learners' expectations and seek reconciliation (Brown, 2009). Secondly, for teachers as action researchers, their claims of having made improvements need to be verified by their students (Cain, 2011). Thirdly, past studies have often indicated that teachers view learners' low proficiency levels (Tsui, 1996; Li, 1998) and reluctance to participate (Tan, 2008; Xie, 2009) as barriers to the implementation of communicative approaches. This study set out to explore whether this is the case.

Most previous studies that have investigated learners' views of communicative approaches have focused on university students, e.g. Savignon and Wang (2003), Brown (2009), with secondary school students' views scarcely investigated. This study addresses this research gap, through drawing on a questionnaire distributed to the learners at the exploratory stage of the larger research project.

Research setting and participants

At present, English is taught from Year 3 (ages 9-10) in Taiwan. Schools at all levels should follow the national curriculum guidelines, which embrace communicative approaches. Nevertheless, the senior-high-school and university entrance tests continue to test only students' vocabulary, grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension, despite several educational reforms. These test formats may influence teachers to use the

Grammar-translation and Audio-lingual methods, which are still dominant in Taiwanese English classrooms (Savignon & Wang, 2003; Hsu, 2015).

Ninety Year 8 (14-15 year-old) students participated in this study. 90 % of them had been formally learning English for at least seven years, including studying at private language schools. Their teachers had all been teaching English for at least ten years, but had apparently limited understanding of communicative approaches, based on interviews and observation data.

Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of a Likert scale and open-ended questions. The 5-point Likert scale was to investigate the students' attitudes towards six statements regarding teacher talk and six statements regarding teaching activities (Table 1 below). Furthermore, two open-ended questions elicited likes/dislikes, and problems encountered in high school English classes to allow insights into the participants' interpretations (Dörnyei, 2003).

Data collection procedures and analysis

After piloting, I distributed the questionnaire to the students in their classrooms personally to allow them to ask for clarification about any question (Bryman, 2008). Anonymity was reaffirmed while the students were doing the questionnaire. The respondents were allowed to answer in L1 given their varied English abilities. With 90 valid copies (100% return rate), the attitude scale data were analysed with SPSS version 21. The open-ended question data were treated qualitatively, analysed with thematic coding (Robson, 2011). The coding processes were iterative, and I aimed to take an unbiased and open-minded stance in developing codes from these data.

Results

Students' attitudes

The results showed the students had very positive attitudes about CLT. What is most striking is the high score on item 9 (71% agreement, when 'agree' and 'agree strongly' are combined); tasks that embody communicative purpose are the essence of communicative approaches. The students also made it clear they wanted to talk and wanted to be corrected (items 1 & 3). In contrast, students were much more ambivalent concerning explicit grammar instruction (item 8), with 24 (27%) students indicating they dislike this occupying too much class time but 31 (34%) being in favour of it. Interestingly, given the option of communicative activities or grammar drills (item 11), a clear majority (49 - 54%) chose the former, as opposed to 12 (13%) opting for the grammar drills.

Table 1. Students' attitudes

Item	Regarding teacher talk (M= 3.63; SD= 1.08; R= reversed)	M	SD
1	<i>I can try to answer my teacher's questions in English if I feel secure and encouraged to.</i>	4.05	.88
2	<i>I like the teacher to often ask questions that are related to ourselves, for example, our interests, opinions, etc.</i>	3.8	.98
3	<i>I like the teacher to correct my oral mistakes so that I can learn.</i>	4.0	.80
4	<i>I do not like the teacher to correct my oral mistakes because I feel I lose face in front of the class.</i>	R 3.69	1.06
8	<i>I do not like it when the teacher spends most of the time teaching grammar rules.</i>	2.9	1.23
10	<i>I prefer to be quiet and just listen passively to the teacher</i>	R 3.53	1.39
Regarding activities (M= 3.69; SD= .29)			
5	<i>I believe I can learn English well by actively participating in interaction with the teacher or my peer.</i>	3.7	1.05
6	<i>I like it when the teacher gives us communicative activities so we can interact in English with our classmates.</i>	3.6	1.09
7	<i>I do not like to talk to my peer in English in class.</i>	R 3.4	1.24
9	<i>The teacher should design meaningful and purposeful language tasks for us to practice using English.</i>	4.2	.89
11	<i>The teacher should spend more time on group and pair work than drilling in sentence structures.</i>	3.7	1.11
12	<i>The teacher should spend more time on role play or games than explicitly teaching sentence structures.</i>	3.5	1.07

Students' preferences and problems

An analysis of the open-ended questions indicates the students prefer communicative activities to focus-on-form instruction. Thirty-one codes emerging from the students' responses to 'things they like' were categorised into five sub-themes, which are further organised into three themes, as summarised in Table 2 on the following page. Of the responses, 48 show a preference for communicative activities, while 7 do so for focus-on-form instruction.

Where I did not fully understand the respondents' intentions, I coded these as 'other items'. For example, 'answer questions' could refer to display or referential questions.

I applied the same procedures to analyse 'things they dislike'. I grouped the nineteen codes emerging from the data under four sub-themes, and further organised them into two themes, as summarised in Table 3 on the following page. I found no codes relating to 'communicative activities', while as many as 46 (30+16) responses relate to 'dislike Focus-on-Forms'.

Particularly disliked was 'listening to grammar instruction' (12 responses).

In responses to the last part of the open-ended questions, grammar and group discussion emerged as the main themes. Only one student reported believing that grammar instruction could help in learning English. Meanwhile, twelve students showed their negative feelings towards it. One student said 'Learning grammar is boring in nature. I cannot stand it when the teacher keeps teaching grammar all the time.' Some noted that 'grammar rules are very difficult to be understood', with one pointing out that the difficulty is due to the complexity of grammar, while another believed that it is due to its wide range.

Another emergent theme related to group discussions. Students reported liking these and finding them interesting. One said 'we can share ideas' through group work, while another reported it 'can reduce pressure'. Another contrasted this mode of learning with presentations to the whole class, which made her "feel nervous". Here again the students showed their preference for group discussion.

Table 2. Things students like to do in English classes

Most frequent codes in each sub-theme (Total codes = 31)	Responses	Sub-themes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • free talk in English • role play • interact with the teacher (Total = 8 codes)	8 6 5 (Total = 24)	Opportunities to use the language	In favour of communicative activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group discussion • group activity • games (Total = 7 codes)	9 5 4 (Total = 24)	Group/pair work	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn vocabulary • memorise vocabulary • read aloud in English (Total = 5 codes)	2 2 1 (Total = 7)	Learning/practising forms	In favour of Focus-on-Forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to stories from the teacher • listen to the teacher talking about their life experience • listen to the teacher speaking in English (Total = 3 codes)	5 2 1 (Total = 8)	Listen to their teacher's English	Neutral/unsure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watch videos • answer questions • enjoy easy lessons (Total = 8 codes)	3 2 1 (Total = 10)	Other items	

Table 3. Things students dislike to do in English classes

Most frequent codes in each sub-theme (Total codes = 19)	Responses	Sub-themes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to grammar instruction • read aloud English • memorise vocabulary (Total = 11 codes)	12 4 3 (Total = 30)	Learning/practising forms	Dislike Focus-on-Forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tests • do homework • take notes (Total = 5 codes)	6 5 3 (Total = 16)	Requirement to write individually	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation/ present a speech • self-introduction to class (Total = 2 codes)	5 1 (Total = 6)	Presentation	Neutral/unsure

Discussion

The majority of the students are in favour of communicative activities, as the attitude scale data reveal. Also in the open-ended questions, they showed more likes and no dislikes for activities that suggest more communicative approaches. The findings are congruent with those of Savignon and Wang's (2003) study of Taiwanese university students. The students' voices also reflect the close affinity between psychological factors and learning. As Dörnyei (1994) notes, group work with a cooperative mode can decrease students' anxiety, which is a pre-requisite for L2 learning. Another

benefit of group discussion is that it allows students to have several opportunities to rehearse before they present to the larger class, and thus feel more secure (Crandall, 1999).

On the other hand, grammar emerged as another focus. In the last part of the open-ended questions, only one student expressed liking for grammar lessons, while a number expressed a contrary view. Some further expressed their difficulties regarding grammar. However, responses to item 8 indicate some students do recognize a need for grammar instruction. My interpretation is that the students have complex

feelings. They do not like grammar to be the main focus of instruction, but they do not agree that it should be abandoned, either. Similar findings can be found in Ngoc and Iwashita's (2012) study of Vietnamese first year university students' attitudes toward CLT, where the authors attribute this phenomenon to wash-back effect from high-stakes exams which focus on testing linguistic structures. The discrete-point grammar instruction provided prior to university may mislead learners to believe that grammar is key to learning English. Brown (2009) also speculates that FL students' preference for grammar instruction may be affected by assessment which prioritizes grammar skills. He points out that teachers need to raise the awareness of learners who overly rely on grammar in order to prevent their likely frustration when they fail to apply their explicit knowledge to produce either speaking or writing of the standard expected.

The data also reveal the students' willingness to answer questions, interact with peers and participate in communicative activities. In order to learn, many students responded that it is necessary for teachers to correct their errors, even if they lose face. Additionally, the most cited preferences, 'group discussion' and 'free talk in English' (Table 2), may suggest that these learners have a desire to move beyond the textbook domain. These findings demonstrate, therefore, that such Taiwanese learners should not be treated as passive participants by their teachers, as unfortunately happens in similar contexts (Tsui, 1996; Li, 1998; Tan, 2008; Xie, 2009).

Conclusion

While this is a small scale study, it is interesting that all parts of the questionnaire appear to present consistent results: the students show very positive attitudes towards communicative activities and preferences for communicative approaches to focus-on-form instruction. The findings suggest that it is necessary to integrate grammar (their fear) with communicative events (their preference), perhaps through integrated form-focused instruction within CLT programmes (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). Findings demonstrate such learners should not be viewed as 'barriers' to the implementation of communicative approaches; CLT is by no means necessarily inappropriate for students in such a context who appear to be active learners. Of course, more research is needed and ideally this should avoid the limitation of relying on questionnaires. Follow-up interviews (Dörnyei, 2003) allow clarification questions, and can help learners more fully express themselves.

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Interview

ELT in difficult circumstances: meeting the challenges

Harry Kuchah Kuchah speaks with Mark Wyatt



Harry Kuchah Kuchah is a Lecturer in TESOL at The University of Bath, UK. Previously, he worked for 14 years as a teacher, teacher trainer, and policy maker in Cameroon and later, as a teaching fellow at the Universities of Warwick and Sheffield in the UK. Harry is interested in teaching young learners, large and multi-grade classes, context-appropriate pedagogies, and teacher development.

Mark: Firstly, congratulations on your plenary at IATEFL in Manchester in April! Les Kirkham (who introduced you) said to me just afterwards: "I knew he'd be good, but I didn't know he'd be that good!" The audience was clearly deeply moved by the way you recounted your experiences of teaching English in difficult circumstances in Cameroon. The video clips accessing learners' voices and photographs of teaching in that context provided powerful testimony too. Can you remember how you first felt as a young teacher when you realized the scale of the challenge, e.g. teaching a class of 235 teenagers in a classroom designed for 60, with just a blackboard and a limited number of textbooks?

Harry: Thank you, Mark, for your very kind words. I must say I was very humbled by the very positive feedback I got from the audience and other online viewers after the plenary. I am indeed grateful to IATEFL's board of trustees for inviting me to give a plenary talk and to all colleagues who helped me put several years of my professional experience into a one hour session.

Regarding your question, my memories of my early experiences as a teacher are still very fresh in my mind, mainly because this was a very defining moment in my life which has been the basis for my own recent and current research interests. I enrolled into the University College of Education as a fresh graduate from the university and was exposed to a very theoretical course with only two months of practice teaching. Upon graduation, I was sent to work as an English language teacher trainer in a village in the Far North of my country. My students were all adults, in fact in my first year, my youngest student was four years older than me! The challenges I faced, working with adults in a community where power relations were heavily defined by age forced me, after a few years, to seek an outlet for my frustrations in a secondary school. Unfortunately I found myself in a secondary school with its own realities, many of which my initial training had not prepared me for. My training had been largely based on theories developed in otherwise favourable teaching and learning circumstances and even when my tutors referred to large classes in their examples these were based on classes of around 60 students. The practical phase of my training was in relatively smaller classrooms of not more than 50 students and I was supported by a senior colleague, as a mentor.

In my new secondary school, I was assigned to teach four different classes/levels with enrolments of between 147 and 235 students. I must say here that these are not the largest secondary level classes in Cameroon, but working with this number of students in a context where the teacher was very often their only source of language input and with no basic resources for English language learning was an added layer of difficulty I had to grapple with. As I have recounted elsewhere, I found myself torn between using traditional teacher fronted and grammar based instruction or abandoning my responsibilities completely. My early lessons were very much based on grammar and vocabulary drills with some limited amount of reading and comprehension, but very quickly, it was clear to me that my students were unable to translate these into meaningful communication. As one of the only two trained English teachers in the school, it was important that my presence produced better learning outcomes than our untrained colleagues. Luckily for me, I found out, through participating in other extra-curricular activities in the school like sports and clubs, that my students had potentials that could be exploited positively in the classroom. It was this realisation and my subsequent decision to share my worries about how I could best help them with my students that helped me develop a pedagogy of partnership with them and together, we were able to overcome the difficulties that the context provided.

Mark: That's great! Could you please tell us briefly a bit more about how this pedagogy of partnership worked?

Harry: *The basic principle of our partnership was that decisions on the content and process of learning for each lesson were to be negotiated between my students and myself. To make up for the lack of textbooks my students were happy to take the responsibility of providing learning materials while I was responsible for ensuring that the materials provided were appropriate for the attainment of curriculum goals. So when a student found a text in English and brought to me, they had to explain why they thought it would be useful for the English class and together, we developed a set of learning objectives as well as classroom activities and/or tasks for a specific lesson. Student provided materials included, amongst other things, short stories, poems, newspaper articles, slogans from billboards, health brochures, audio-recorded newscasts, and interviews with English speakers living in the community. These materials served mainly as stimuli for student-generated materials which we eventually edited and used in other classes. We also agreed to move the classroom outside and to work in groups under trees; this of course required co-developing new rules and regulations to ensure that the outdoor 'classroom' did not become chaotic. Overall, this new partnership helped build students' self-esteem and encouraged collaborative learning and student autonomy and motivation in a way I had not predicted.*

Mark: That's really interesting, highly innovative and it suggests considerable personal professional development through thoughtful and sensitive interaction with the learners and their environment. Besides these learners and this environment and your inner resources, what help was available to you in Cameroon early in your career, as you looked to develop yourself as a teacher?

Harry: *My first three years as a teacher were spent in isolation, working in a village where I was the only trained English teacher and with very little time and opportunity to share experiences with colleagues in the other schools. It is not until I moved to the secondary school in the regional headquarters that my colleague encouraged me to join the local English Language Teachers' Association (ELTA). The membership of our local ELTA was made up of mainly secondary school teachers from around the region and regional pedagogic inspectors. We met once every two months and discussed issues of relevance to our profession, including challenges in classroom practice and strategies for engaging students in learning. This, together with help from my students in the secondary school was the turning point in my professional development; it broke the isolation of my earlier years and offered opportunities for me to share challenges and experiences with colleagues and what I learned from colleagues is still immeasurable. I was also lucky in that I quickly rose in the ranks of the local ELTA and eventually became a leading member of the National body, the Cameroon English Language and Literature*

Teachers Association (CAMELTA) serving as Secretary General and Chief Convenor, and later as VP for International Outreach. These responsibilities were central to my sense of empowerment and have greatly shaped my approach to research and my vision of the ELT profession in challenging contexts like mine.

Mark: You came to the UK originally on an A.S. Hornby Educational Trust Scholarship and did an MA and subsequently a PhD at Warwick (where your mentors included Shelagh Rixon and Richard Smith). Firstly, how important do you think the work of the Hornby Trust is in helping teachers of English from different parts of the world engage in postgraduate studies in the UK, and secondly, how did your own experiences at the university help you grow as a researcher?

Harry: *As you would probably know, I pride myself in being a beneficiary of a Hornby Trust Scholarship and part of a community of scholars who are capable of, and who indeed have influenced decisions in ELT in many countries around the world, particularly in developing world contexts. In terms of my professional development, I would say my year as a Hornby scholar was the turning point for me. I came to the UK with considerable experience as a teacher and teacher trainer and with professional responsibilities in my country but it was the opportunity to meet experienced professionals from all over the world and to be taught by leading researchers in different areas of ELT that made me who I am today. The Hornby Alumni community is growing and so is their impact in different areas of the ELT profession. It is thanks to the Hornby Trust scholarship and to my time at Warwick that I was able, not only to make my voice heard on the international scene, but also to influence the growth and international outreach of CAMELTA. Together with other Hornby Alumni in Cameroon, we have been able to support the professional growth of nearly 2000 teachers in Cameroon and thanks to contacts I made during my Hornby years, our annual conferences in Cameroon have always benefited from the knowhow of renowned experts in our field.*

In terms of my development as a researcher, my experiences at Warwick were not only helpful in transforming me from a practitioner to a reflective practitioner, but also introduced me to qualitative approaches to research. Prior to coming to Warwick University, my experience of ELT research was predominantly quasi-experimental and in many ways, void of the human face of my profession which I had come to cherish through my work with my students and colleagues within CAMELTA. It is at Warwick that I was exposed to a wide range of research perspectives and procedures which resonated with my professional experience. Being an influential member of CAMELTA and a policy maker at the MoE, I was keen to develop a research pathway that would foreground the voices of both teachers and learners and to bring these voices to

bear not only on policy decisions in my country but also within the global ELT community that has for long been dominated by voices from other parts of the world. As you know, my research interests include teaching English to young learners, context appropriate methodology and language teacher development and these are the footprints of people like Shelagh Rixon, Annamaria Pinter and Richard Smith who played the most important roles in shaping the researcher that I am becoming.

Mark: Strategies you have adopted to fulfil the goal of developing and sharing context-appropriate pedagogy include exploring teachers' and learners' views and comparing them. What would you say were the key insights you gained from your PhD research in this?

Harry: *It is now four years since I collected data for my PhD research but I can still hear the voices of my child participants, 11 year olds teaching me about what a good English teacher should do to make language learning interesting and cognitively challenging for learners. I can still see the faces of my adult participants, teachers, glowing as they tell stories of successful classroom practices and reflect on children's perspectives of good teaching. My PhD research helped me realise four important things: (a) that children were capable of identifying and explaining good teaching (b) that encouraging teachers to reflect on the positives of their, and their colleagues' practices and challenging them with insights from learners' perspectives about good teaching can lead to the generation of ideas and principles for contextually appropriate pedagogies (c) that rapport building is as important for teaching as it is for teacher training and development and (d) that research and teacher development can be mutually inclusive.*

Mark: Thanks, Harry. What are some of the practical implications of these insights for practitioners in different contexts?

Harry: *A key implication, as I see it, is the need for practitioners – by whom I mean teacher trainers and teachers – to re-align ELT pedagogy with local constraints and possibilities and to give more value to the contribution of learners and teachers in the enactment of contextually appropriate/effective pedagogic principles and practices. Students' voices should not only be used to complement adult*

perspectives, but also to challenge teachers and trainers to revisit the theoretical basis of their own practices. What is more, teacher training and pedagogic innovation in the developing world is still very strongly driven by ideas from the global North, with the result that even the most well-intentioned innovation projects tend to die out quickly once the funding for them ends. There may be value in paying closer attention to the voices and experiences of local teachers and in using these experiences as enablers (rather than as barriers) for pedagogic innovation.

Mark: One current CAMELTA project you have been working on with Richard Smith involves 'teacher association research', i.e. exploring issues of importance to teachers within an association with a view to sharing context-appropriate pedagogy. You have presented preliminary findings in IATEFL Voices 236 and ELT Research 30. How do you see this research as developing?

Harry: *The project is in its very early stages and Richard and I are very careful not to make big claims about its potential to go any further. However, there are signs within CAMELTA that the project is being adopted by the wider membership. At the moment, we have put together all research questions suggested by CAMELTA members as well as responses to the open ended questionnaire and have uploaded these on the ReSIG and CAMELTA websites. Our goal is to make the data freely available to everyone interested in research about teaching in Cameroon, especially student teachers in the colleges of education and potential MA students. We hope these data will form the basis for further research and that investigations developed around CAMELTA research questions will eventually be useful to its membership.*

Members of the CAMELTA research committee are also now interviewing a small group of previous respondents to the open-ended questionnaire so that we can hear their stories and reflections on their successes in more depth. These, alongside pictures from their classrooms will eventually be published online and in a newsletter as a way of encouraging further reflection on good practice.

Mark: Thank you very much, Harry, for sharing this with us. Best of luck with the project!

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A critical analysis of action research outside the confines of a degree programme: lessons learned

Fauzia Shamim

Introduction

My personal experience of conducting action research several years ago as part of an online certificate program convinced me of the benefits of using action research as a teacher development strategy both for my own practice as a teacher as well as for my teacher students aspiring to achieve excellence in their teaching. This belief was subsequently strengthened by looking at the action research reports and papers presented by the teacher-learners in the in-service teacher education courses I have given. I found, in particular, that the experience of undertaking action research gave these teachers many useful insights about their own teaching and of their learners in the process.

Action research is a well-known teacher development strategy and often embedded into teacher certification and degree programs around the world. Several accounts of the benefits of action research for teachers, as well as the challenges faced in the process, are found in the literature (e.g. Borg, 2013; Burns, 2010, 2011, 2013; Thorne & Qiang, 1996; Wallace, 1998). According to Burns (2010), action research can:

- Reinvigorate teaching
- Lead to positive change
- Raise teachers' awareness of the complexities of their work
- Show teachers what drives their personal approaches to teaching.

(adapted from Burns 2010: 7)

Action research is a useful tool for teachers' continuing professional development, as "The route is personal enquiry (What do I do?), rather than others' advice (What do you think I should do?)" (McNiff 2002: 24). Action and reflection on action can empower teachers to take charge of their own learning for improving their practice and consequently student learning outcomes (Elliot, 1991; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Wallace,

1998). However, doing action research poses many challenges for the teachers, particularly if they undertake action research outside the confines of a degree programme. These include time constraints, lack of organizational support and little or no familiarity with research and data collection methods (Borg, 2013; Burns, 2010, 2011).

As Borg (2013) highlights, most published action research comprises dissertations in the context of higher education. This may be due to the structured support provided for developing research and academic writing skills in degree programmes in higher education settings, which gives confidence to the participants to share their research with the wider academic community through conference presentations and publication. However, according to Borg, doing action research within a degree programme can have an impact on teachers' purposes for undertaking their research, which often tend to be instrumental rather than intrinsic (p.184-85). A few studies that are available of teachers' conducting action research outside the confines of a degree programme, i.e., *in their everyday lives and work contexts*, underline "the need for structure and support in initiatives which seek to promote teacher research" (Borg, 2013:190). Additionally, as discussed later, it may be beneficial to support teachers' intrinsic motivation to sustain their interest in researching their own or their colleagues' practice to improve it.

This article reports on two action research programmes conducted for teachers' professional development in their everyday lives and work contexts; the first programme was organized by a teacher organization in Pakistan, and the second by the English Language Center of a university in Saudi Arabia (KSA). In both cases, few teachers were able to participate in these professional development initiatives, except from the margins. For example, all the participants attended the formal introductory workshop(s) at the beginning of the programme; several participating teachers also tried to attend the fortnightly group meetings, whenever possible; a vast majority also participated in the end of programme writing workshops. However, only a few teachers were able to do sustained work on their action research studies and share them with their colleagues due to various reasons discussed in subsequent sections. Hence, the aim of this paper is to critically analyze the two cases to identify the reasons for teachers' *marginal* participation in professional development through action research programmes. The lessons learnt may help in enhancing teachers' successful or fuller participation in such programmes in the future.

I begin by presenting the two case studies. Next, the cases are critically analyzed in terms of the essential features of the programmes such as the support mechanisms available for the teachers. Finally, lessons learnt from this analysis are shared.

Two case studies

Case 1: SPELT teacher development project in Pakistan

A few years ago, the Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers (SPELT) organized a one-year action research programme for the professional development of its members in Pakistan. The main driving force for the participating teachers was pursuing their own personal and professional development. There was little external incentive as there was no involvement from their institutions or even formal certification at the end of the programme, as is the case in all the teacher training programmes offered by SPELT.

Participating teachers were supported, in an introductory workshop conducted by an invited foreign consultant, to understand the basic concepts of action research, identify and fine-tune their topics, and develop an action plan. Subsequently, mentoring and support was provided to all the 22 participants over a period of one year by a local consultant (the author) in fortnightly group sessions. Specific needs-based workshops were also offered on ways of collecting data. Individual and collective problems faced during the process of doing action research were also addressed in these meetings. Finally, towards the end of the project, a three-day workshop was conducted by the team of consultants to help the participants in writing up their research reports. A few teachers dropped out of the project during the year. Several continued to attend the group meetings as and when they could. However, only two of the 17 teachers who attended the final report-writing workshop submitted action research reports.

As Borg (2013) and others have argued, the success of an action research project should not be judged solely on the basis of the number of research reports completed. Dissemination of teacher research, though important, can be done in other ways such as through conference presentations and sharing in communities of practice. While none of these activities could be undertaken at a formal level for various reasons, notes of discussions in group meetings and the entries in the author's reflective diary revealed that all the participating teachers felt that action research could be a helpful strategy for their professional development. The teachers were particularly appreciative of the support offered to them in regard to identifying their topics and developing their action plans, as well as in developing their reflective practice and research skills. However, during the fortnightly meetings, the participants also shared several challenges faced during the process. The teachers' major challenges included: lack of support from their institutional heads, competing priorities such as exams, their lack of familiarity with basic research methods, and little or no experience in collecting data and systematic documentation for reflection as evidence of successful use of selected strategies in the classrooms. This, they felt, prevented them from doing sustained work on their action research studies. Also,

the participants shared that their lack of familiarity with the conventions of academic research writing proved to be a major constraint in writing up their action research reports. These resonate with challenges reported by teachers in other contexts (e.g. Burns, 2011). We must remember that the teachers' participation in the SPELT project was totally voluntary and that they were not obliged to seek their head teacher's permission to do so, though in hindsight institutional support might have helped them get some acknowledgment for their efforts, even if it did not release time for their action research studies.

Case 2: Action research for teacher development at a university in Saudi Arabia

In 2011, I was invited to develop a one-year action research programme by the Director of the English Language Centre (ELC) at a university in Saudi Arabia. The aim was to provide the teachers with an opportunity to focus on their individual development needs based on their classroom practice, in the specific context of an intensive English language course offered within the university's preparatory year program. All female teachers (60+) were invited to participate in this one-term (4-6 months) action research programme to be led by a mentor (the author).

Based on my earlier experience in Pakistan, I realized that the teachers would need some basic training to understand the steps and processes of recording and analyzing classroom data. Hence, all the teachers were provided with an initial half-day training workshop to initiate them into the process and help them think about topics for investigation. In a follow-up workshop, only those teachers who volunteered to participate in the project (30 teachers) were guided to draw up their action plans in relation to their specific topics with research questions, timelines, dissemination plans, etc. Teachers were also provided with online links to the relevant literature on action research. Subsequently, ongoing facilitation and support was provided to the participants through regular fortnightly meetings. A final workshop was held in the second term to help the participating teachers write up their action research reports.

While several teachers attended the fortnightly meetings, only two teachers conducted action research in a systematic way - one for a period of two weeks and the other for one term. Subsequently, both the participating teachers presented their research findings to the Action Research group in one of its meetings; the second teacher also presented a paper with the mentor (author) at a national conference in KSA (Shamim & Tarmann, 2012). It must be noted that while the action research program had overall institutional support, it was not part of the ELC's plan for teacher development. The teachers' participation in the program was voluntary and carried no extrinsic incentive or reward for teachers. Accordingly, Ayesha Tarmann, one of the participating teachers, reported that the main reason for her interest and sustained work was a "morally compelling reason",

i.e. to improve her teaching practices for increasing the learning outcomes of her students. Among other things, she felt empowered:

What it did for me right from the start was to mitigate the feeling of helplessness that was zapping my energy. Here I had been given a means to tackle my problems directly, daily, and in a practical way. I made a lesson plan to the best of my ability, executed it, reflected on the lesson and whether it had turned out the way I wanted, got feedback from my students in a clear, measurable manner, and wrote down any reflections and observations pertinent to it. (Excerpt from Aysha's reflective account).

She also felt that the “non-judgmental, constructive, informative feedback” from the mentor played an important role in her development: “I gained the confidence to make a choice whereas before I was following the book to the letter and the exasperation of my students who already knew what was coming next”.

Several challenges were also shared by the participants including those teachers who participated from the margins only, i.e. by attending some group meetings. These included time constraints, competing priorities and the time and effort required for the systematic recording and analysis of the data. Another interesting challenge was the reported difficulty in selecting *one* issue to focus on from amongst a host of problems faced in the context.

A critical analysis of the case studies

As described above, the two case studies were carried out in two widely different contexts in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. However, they shared some essential features as follows:

1. Teachers' participation was on a voluntary basis.
2. Teachers were free to select issues/research topics based on their own professional development needs or interests.
3. Both the research programmes had a clear structure with starting and completion dates and a planned set of activities outlined for the year. These were also shared with the participants at the outset.
4. Initial training was provided in the basic concepts and process of action research and also in identifying topics and developing action plans.
5. Support was provided in both the programmes for writing up the final report. In the KSA programme, the participants were also supported in presenting the research findings to different audiences.
6. Ongoing mentoring support was provided in a structured way through regular fortnightly meetings. These meetings also provided the participants with opportunities for collaborative work.

In terms of institutional support, while the participating teachers in the SPELT project had little or no support from their institutional heads, it was available for the teachers in the KSA project. However, as mentioned

earlier, participation in the ELC action research programme did not form part of the professional development plan for the teachers at the institutional level. Moreover, there were no incentives or rewards for teachers' participation, neither were there any negative consequences for non-participation. It seems that in both cases, the participants' intrinsic motivation to develop professionally through action research was not enough in the face of all odds, to sustain their interest in and/or complete their action research studies.

Borg (2013:222-223) presents a check list of facilitative conditions for the success of teacher research projects in teachers' everyday life and work contexts. Interestingly, many of these facilitative conditions (except for institutional support in the SPELT case) were present in the two cases reported above. However, teachers' participation still remained very low.

The next section presents the lessons learnt from a critical analysis of the two cases. These highlight some essential conditions for action research to be a viable teacher development strategy. Additionally, it reiterates the need for providing structured support to the participating teachers particularly in action research initiatives outside the confines of a degree programme.

Lessons learned

The critical analysis of the two case studies indicates that action research can be a useful teacher development strategy in teachers' everyday life and work contexts *only if* the following conditions are met:

- Teachers have a *strong intrinsic motivation* (a “morally compelling purpose”) to improve their practice whatever the odds.
- There is some *extrinsic motivation* similar to a degree-awarding programme. For example, it becomes part of teachers' personal development plan sanctioned by the institution.

The role of *structured support* provided for developing the participants' research skills as well as *the ongoing mentoring support* in lesson planning and reflection on the lessons was highlighted by the participants as a positive feature in both the programmes. Hence, support mechanisms need to be factored in at the planning stage of an action research initiative. In addition, some release time can help the teachers do more sustained work on their action research, as both reflective practice, and systematic data collection and analysis require extra time and effort. However, a critical analysis of the two cases indicates that while structure and support may be necessary for an action research initiative these are not sufficient conditions for its success. In fact, the success of an action research programme in teachers' everyday life and work contexts seems to depend largely on their intrinsic and/or some extrinsic motivation.

Though it can be argued that the benefits of action research may outweigh the challenges faced by the teachers in pursuing it for their professional development, the minimum conditions identified above are difficult to meet in teachers' everyday life and work contexts, particularly in the difficult circumstances in which a vast majority of teachers work in many countries around the world (Kuchah & Shamim, forthcoming; West, 1960). This raises an important question: Is action research a viable strategy for teacher development outside the confines of a degree program, or more specifically, within teachers' everyday life and work contexts?

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Writing and publishing teacher research: prospects for an emerging genre

Simon Mumford

Introduction

All teachers need to be able to write, and the writing ability of teachers seems to be attracting increasing interest amongst researchers. This trend is illustrated by several relatively recent examples. In the context of teaching L1 writing to children, teachers have been encouraged to take up creative writing so that they can teach more effectively (Cremin, 2006). In regard to foreign language teaching, Shin (2003) describes an approach to pre-service training in which participants were encouraged to write reflective journals, thus allowing self-assessment of their progress not only as teachers, but also as writers. Another study, (Atay & Kurt, 2006), investigates L2 writing anxiety in prospective teachers, finding that it has the potential to negatively affect teaching.

In addition to improving language skills and developing empathy with student writers, a previously rather neglected purpose for writing is gaining greater prominence in the world of language teaching. According to Borg and Liu (2013: 271), “teachers are increasingly being encouraged to take charge of their own professional development by assuming the role of teacher as researcher.” This is coming about due to pressure to engage in professional development from employers, as well as increased opportunities, and teachers’ own motivation. This has implications for teachers’ ability to write, as many authorities in the field are insisting that publication, or at least some form of sharing, is necessary for work to be considered research (Borg, 2013: 9). In other words, as well as research skills, teachers are being encouraged to learn presentation, and, in particular, writing skills.

Research writing is different from other types of teacher writing because it implies a wider target audience and often an international one, which subsequently raises a number of issues. Firstly, what are the benefits for teachers of writing up research for public consumption? Secondly, what is the nature of teacher research (TR) writing and how does it differ from other research writing? Finally, what are the options for publishing TR? This article considers the benefits of writing up TR,

briefly explores the relatively new genre of TR writing, and then considers the role of local publishing in facilitating the emergence of the new genre.

Why write up TR?

Different positions are held on the need to write up TR. While acknowledging the clear benefits of writing up, Taber (2007) argues that it is perfectly acceptable for teachers to do research without doing so. He notes that research can be shared more informally, through discussion, depending on the purpose of the research; for example, if the work is related only to the particular institution where the research is conducted, or if carrying out research and sharing it with colleagues is a condition of employment (Taber 2007: 173). However, as noted previously, many researchers argue that some form of public sharing, whether written or spoken, is a condition for work being regarded as research. In this view, if not made public in some way, work is regarded as private inquiry rather than research (Borg 2013: 9). Clearly, there are various oral alternatives to writing, involving conversations, discussions and presentations (Burns 2010). Growing opportunities for verbal reports have been provided by the internet, via podcasts and other broadcast technologies. However, arguably, to be fully in the public domain, research needs to be published. As the opportunities and pressures to conduct TR increase, writing for publication is likely to become a more central focus of professional development.

In addition to external pressures, there are clear intrinsic benefits for teacher researchers who write up their work. According to Berthoff (1987), writing is a key stage of the research process, because the researcher is challenged to express the findings in a way that is clear to readers. In this process, Berthoff argues, writers are forced to go beyond surface explanations, and to theorize their work through in-depth analysis, thus transforming experience into knowledge. In other words, paradoxically, it is the process of writing up the research for others to read that allows the researchers themselves to fully understand implications of their research. The explicit purpose of publishing TR is to put findings in the public domain; however, the very process of writing up research plays a key role in developing the researchers’ own understanding of their classrooms.

Teacher researchers preparing manuscripts are faced with the issues of producing writing of an appropriate standard, and finding a suitable outlet for their work. These two closely related issues are examined respectively in the next two sections.

TR writing as an emerging genre

The relationship between TR written by practising teachers and other types of research is a complex one. TR is often considered to be different from mainstream research. It is true that there are journals that publish TR articles which are well-recognised in their field, with the highest standards of academic rigour. Borg (2013: 21) notes, however, that the contributors to these journals,

(e.g. *ELT Journal*) are likely to be professional researchers rather than practicing teachers. For the vast majority of teachers, such journals with their exacting standards are out of reach. For many teachers, TR publication means something rather different.

According to Taber (2007), articles by teacher researchers are likely to be shorter, more conversational in style, and less rigorous in terms of following the formal procedures of research. He also notes these articles are written for peers rather than academics, have a smaller number of references, and aim to be interesting and provocative, rather than to introduce new concepts and theories.

However, more recently, it has been noted that the distinction between teacher and academic research may not be so clear-cut. As the field of TR proliferates, instead of considering a strict distinction, it may be more helpful to consider a continuum, as described by Wedell (2015). Such an approach acknowledges, for example, the possibility that a local, narrowly-focused TR project may have implications for the wider educational context as well. It may therefore be misleading to perceive teachers and academics as two distinct groups of researchers, writing for different purposes and different audiences; the reality is likely to be far more complex.

Another feature of TR is the involvement of the researcher in a very direct way; writing may be more personal and more emotional, involving more frequent use of first person pronouns (Dadds, 1993). Dadds also argues that teachers' direct involvement with the participants, i.e. their own students, inevitably means that TR will be less objective than positivist research. Borg (2013: 65) points out that while the very concept of subjectivity in research is a concern for some teachers, the personal nature of TR means that, as in much qualitative Social Science research, 'disciplined subjectivity' may be a more realistic goal than 'scientific objectivity'. In other words, in spite of their close personal involvement, teacher researchers are not prevented from taking a critical view.

As mentioned, TR is more associated with the qualitative research style of the Social Sciences, but compared to much published research, writing style is likely to be more informal in TR written by teachers, who are unlikely to consider that a fully academic style serves their purpose or is appropriate for their audience. It is therefore expected that structures typical of formal academic prose, which include structures such as complex noun phrases involving multiple post-modification (Biber et al. 1999), would be less common, and probably less desirable, considering the readership of this type of TR.

Because TR is more personal and reflective than the traditional concept of research, it may be useful to think of it as a new genre, a hybrid between formal research, and more informal, reflective writing. As Hyland (2002: 390) notes, communities are defined by their

communicative practices, i.e. it is the writing produced by a community itself that creates a genre; genre cannot be imposed from outside. So, it is possible to argue that TR is a unique and evolving genre, which is developing its own approaches and standards in accordance with its needs and its context.

However, in spite of the more informal nature of its language and more flexible research standards, publishing in practitioner journals can present many challenges for teachers. Practitioner journals have standards related to whether the journal is local, national or international, and whether it is peer-reviewed or not (Taber, 2007). The limited journal space for practitioner research, and the standards imposed will represent a considerable obstacle to publication for many teacher researchers. Therefore, there seems to be a tension between the obvious benefits of writing up research, and the limited prospects for publication. This presents a dilemma: Why write up research if it is difficult to find a publishing opportunity?

New opportunities for publication and the growth of the discourse community

A possible solution for teachers to publish their research is through local publishing, specifically, the publications by individual institutions of their own teachers' research. One example of this is the publication by Gediz University in Izmir, Turkey, of four volumes of its own teachers' work, the latest in association with IATEFL (Dikilitaş, Smith & Trotman 2015). Such local publishing projects have the potential to allow the emergence of a new genre, due to their freedom from the conditions of publication demanded by academic journals, which stipulate, for example, that all research must make an important contribution to the field. Editors are able to impose their own standards, which permits flexibility both in terms of the research conducted and the language used to describe it. In the case of researchers writing in L2, such projects allow the use of varieties of English, which may deviate from standard academic language, but are highly appropriate for local communication (Canagarajah, 1999). As a result of publishing TR in this way, institutions and organisations will be in a position to raise standards of language and research content as the genre matures, and as local researchers and publishers develop expertise.

However, a locally produced volume of TR lacks the readership that a subscription journal has. Clearly, a newly emerging genre cannot exist without a corresponding discourse community. Therefore, contact through teacher networks and conferences will play an important role in creating a readership for such volumes, which are the output of specific teacher development projects. Another possibility is that a regularly published journal produces a special edition dedicated to a particular project, e.g. the edition of Cambridge Research Notes devoted to research undertaken as part of the ELICOS program in Australia (Burns 2014). There is also the possibility that participating in TR could lead

to publication in refereed subscriber journals which cater for academic and professional interests, such as the English Language Teaching Journal, to which dedicated teacher researchers may eventually aspire. The development of a 'spoken' discourse community, through which the texts of the community can be discussed, will in turn facilitate the growth of the community through the initiation of new members (Borg, 2003). The recent ReSIG conference hosted by Gediz University in İzmir, Turkey, is a good example of an opportunity for relatively inexperienced researchers to present work to a wider audience, to take part in formal and informal discussions, to learn about the work of their peers in other institutions, and to publish in conference proceedings.

For many researchers, therefore, local initiatives represent not only the best hope for publication, but also an opportunity to join a community of teacher researchers. The growth of local TR publishing also has implications for teacher education, because training in research strongly implies training in writing. While the development of writing skills has been associated with higher formal qualifications such as Master degrees, any shift in emphasis in in-service teacher education towards TR would create a corresponding need for writing skills. Thus, in support of the wider research process, a greater emphasis may be placed on writing in teacher development programs; in fact, writing is in many ways the key research skill, from the formulation of the research question to the final analysis and interpretation. However, as we have seen, the exact standards of writing expected in any particular context will depend on many factors.

Conclusion

The writing and publication of TR is intrinsically linked to a number of current debates in language teaching: the discussions concerning the standards required in academic writing publication, the contrasting roles of practitioner research and academic research, and power relations between the centre (English speaking countries) and the periphery (countries where English is a foreign language). Thus, TR has implications not only at the individual and institutional level, but at the national and international level. TR increases understanding of the classroom, and it can strengthen the ELT community, but only if it reaches an audience. This leads to a further implication related to teacher development generally, the need for a specific focus on the writing up and publishing stage of the TR process, combined with support and guidance for teachers aiming to get their projects into print.

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Biodata

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ReSIG online discussions in early 2016

February

Taking place just prior to the first annual Latin American conference on teacher research, which is being held in Santiago, Chile, our February ReSIG online discussion will have a corresponding South American theme. The moderators will also be South American, representing three different countries in the region, but united by a commitment to support teacher research: Darío Luis Banegas (Argentina), Inés Miller (Brazil) and Paula Rebolledo (Chile).

Further information about the two-week online discussion (10th-24th February 2016) will be available here:

<http://resig.weebly.com/online-discussions.html>

To participate in the discussion, you need to join the ReSIG's yahoo group, which is open to members of the SIG and non-members alike:

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/resig/info>

March

Our March discussion will be on interviewing. The moderator will be Steve Mann. The following month, Steve will be leading the ReSIG's PCE in Birmingham:

<http://resig.weebly.com/pce-2016.html>

Steve is aiming through the PCE to give participants a stronger understanding of the use of interviews in the EFL context and hands-on experience of different interview approaches. He will also be demonstrating the value of reflective practice and reflexivity in the analysis and representation of data. The online discussion in March will raise awareness of some of the key issues.

Links and Resources

ReSIG YouTube channel

(<https://www.youtube.com/user/IATEFLResearchSIG>) you can find:

- A number of videos from the 2015 PCE on 'The Researcher's Journey', including 3 impulse sessions delivered by David Nunan, Sue Garton and Cynthia White, and 17 poster presentations by teacher researchers from around the world.
- A four-part video of a workshop led by Simon Borg on 'Doing Good Quality ELT Research'. This took place at the ELT Malta Conference in 2014.


Resources section of the website

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

- Two e-books consisting of stories and reports of teacher research conducted in a broad range of contexts. *Teachers Research!* (2015) is edited by Deborah Bullock and Richard Smith while *Teacher-researchers in Action* (2015) is edited by Kenan Dikilitaş, Richard Smith and Wayne Trotman.



- Slides and videos from the 2014 ReSIG conference in Izmir. These include plenaries by: Anne Burns on 'Renewing classroom practices through collaborative action research'; Dick Allwright on 'Putting "understanding" first in practitioner research'; and Richard Smith on 'Practical principles for exploratory action research'.



Conversations with a purpose: Reflecting on interviewing in EFL research

- Do you use interviews in your research?
- Have you faced any challenges in planning for and managing interview interaction?
- Do you find it difficult to write interview questions?
- Would you like to learn more about different approaches that are possible within EFL research interviews?

Yes? Then come to the IATEFL ReSIG PCE! Dr Steve Mann from the University of Warwick will lead an interactive day on the use of interviews in EFL research. During the course of the day, you will have the opportunity to raise and discuss your issues relating to the use of interviews in your data collection. Steve will assist participants in the development of an interview approach and set of questions, which we will then use for a live interview with Graham Hall, editor of the ELT Journal, about his experience of the EFL research field.

The day aims to give participants a stronger understanding of the use of interviews in the EFL context and hands-on experience of the different interview approaches that a researcher might take. It will also demonstrate the value of reflective practice and reflexivity in the analysis and representation of data.

We look forward to welcoming you to what promises to be a fascinating day of conversation and activity around interviewing for research!

When: Tuesday 12th April 2016, 10:00-17:00

Where: ICC, Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2EA

Register: <http://www.iatefl.org/annual-conference/birmingham-2016>

