



# ELT RESEARCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IATEFL RESEARCH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP



## March 2018 - Issue 33

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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](http://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](mailto:resigeditors@gmail.com). Please visit the SIG website <http://resig.weebly.com/> for author guidelines (under 'Publications').

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# Editorial

Dear Research SIG members,

We are delighted to bring you a new issue, 33, of *ELT Research*, the newsletter of IATEFL Research SIG. This publication features a wide range of contributions, from research journey reflective pieces and articles, to papers and reports from the 51<sup>st</sup> IATEFL Conference and Pre-Conference Event 2017 held in Glasgow, reports from SIG-supported events, other conferences, outreach events and research projects, and three reviews of research-related publications.

## Articles about Research

Following this editorial and a note from the joint ReSIG co-ordinators, this issue begins with two eminent past ReSIG co-ordinators reflecting on their research journeys. First, Simon Borg (University of Leeds) reflects on the enduring appeal of language teacher cognition, a research area which was much less developed just over 20 years ago, when it became the focus of his PhD. Simon recalls how his qualitative research in L2 grammar teacher cognition, in particular, found an audience ready for explorations of teachers' mental lives, with publications in journals such as *TESOL Quarterly*, *Applied Linguistics* and *System* quickly drawing attention to the field. Simon then expands on how his research trajectory subsequently widened to embrace language teacher cognition, in general, before focusing on further dimensions of this: research engagement and autonomy. Simon concludes by highlighting the value of this line of inquiry, for example by helping us understand how teachers learn; he also indicates how the field is moving forward.

Next, Sarah Mercer (University of Graz) reflects on how her interest in the psychology of language learning and teaching developed. She recounts her growing interest as a teacher in learners' thoughts, feelings, motives, needs and wants, and her realization that her own teacher education had little prepared her for investigating these issues. She explains how this led her to exploring strategy use and then reading about different psychological theories, such as self-concept, which appealed, partly for the affective, socially-situated research associated with this construct. More recently, Sarah explains, her research with self-concept has extended into an interest in exploring complexity perspectives. Sarah has also extended her research in other ways, for example by focusing more on language teacher psychology, the title of a co-edited book she recently produced. Sarah concludes by offering the following advice to early-career academics: follow your heart!

Our third article in this section is an account by Katja Težak (Universities of Maribor and Graz) of using think-aloud protocols in researching EFL creative writing. After

highlighting the need to understand creative processes, Katja discusses the advantages and disadvantages of different methods that can be used to investigate these: concurrent and retrospective think-aloud protocols. Katja explains why she chose the former method for her study, describes how she used it and then evaluates, with the help of data from the study, how valuable it was. She concludes by highlighting practical implications.

## Research SIG at 51<sup>st</sup> IATEFL Conference 2017, Glasgow

First, Loreto Aliaga-Salas (University of Leeds), winner of a ReSIG scholarship, reports on selected ReSIG events and talks at the IATEFL Conference in Glasgow in 2017. She offers her impressions of the *Research SIG Pre-Conference Event* entitled 'Researching ELT History: A Hands-on Workshop' led by Friederike Klippel and Richard Smith; the *Research SIG Day*, which brought together seven interesting presentations by Judith Hanks, Robert Cooper, Clare Furneaux, Stephanie Aldred, Ella Ait-Zaouit, Loreto Aliaga, and Chris Edgoose, out of which Loreto reflects on three; the *ReSIG Symposium on Teacher-research for difficult circumstances* which featured four main papers: 'Four years of exploratory action research in Chile: taking stock' by Richard Smith and Paula Rebolledo, 'Teacher Research 2.0' by Michelle Evans and Asli Lidice Gokturk Saglam, 'Teacher association research in Cameroon: recent developments' by Harry Kuchah, and 'Children's voice and choice in Indian English classrooms' by Annamaria Pinter and Rama Mathew; and three of the five *Plenary Sessions* by Gabriel Diaz Maggioli, Sarah Mercer, JJ Wilson, Jane Setter and Imtiaz Dharker. Loreto concludes by highlighting how research is increasingly occupying a central space in ELT discussions, and by reflecting on how locally-informed research practices are increasingly being shared.

Similarly interested in the close relationships between research and pedagogy, Rob Cooper (St Mary's University) explores three examples of language teacher research writing. This opinion piece, which was based on his doctoral research, was part of the IATEFL Conference Research SIG Day.

## Conference and Workshop Reports

Our next section includes conference and workshop reports from Macedonia, Turkey and Warwick. The first of these reports is provided by Elena Ončevska Ager (Ss Cyril and Methodius University), who describes a three-day IATEFL ReSIG-supported event run by Angi Malderez in Skopje that aimed to help EFL teachers to engage more effectively "in sustainable, effective, time-efficient, collaborative and informed investigations into their teaching practices". Ončevska Ager describes the Systematic Informed Reflective Practice mentoring model presented by Malderez at this workshop, and highlights key dimensions to its use: bonding with critical friends, noticing, being able to bypass judgement to support learnacy development. Ončevska Ager relates

that groups that bonded during the workshop agreed to work with each other throughout the next year, which sounds like very sustainable continuing professional development.

The next event reported on here is the IATEFL ReSIG-supported 'Teachers Research!' Conference in Istanbul 2017 that was hosted for the second year in a row by Bahçeşehir University. Chris Banister provides a comprehensive report of the conference, discussing plenaries, including those by Gary Barkhuizen and Anne Burns, and workshops and poster presentations that made an impression on him. Chris values the way the event brings together a wide range of perspectives from the teacher research community, allowing all to submerge themselves "in their passion for research". This thought is echoed by two participants who have also supplied their impressions of the conference. Claudia Bustos-Morago, one of these participants, reports that sharing "our research from a 'first-person' perspective, making public the knowledge we acquired for everyone's benefit, we were all special and unique, and this feeling of 'uniqueness' made it possible for the conference to truly be 'participant-centred'". Cemile Buğra, the other of these participants, likewise highlights that one of the things she values about this conference is that "as teachers we are on the stage sharing our own ideas, practices, and real classroom experiences". Cemile ends with a poem about research, and we also include another two she has produced, inspired by the conference and by taking part in research.

Finally in this section, Sal Consoli (University of Warwick) and Takumi Aoyama (University of Warwick) report on the first steps of The Forum on Language Learning Motivation (FOLLM) they are co-founders of. In particular they present us with a report of its first three events held at different universities in the UK. Speakers at these events include Dr Martin Lamb (University of Leeds) at the first; Prof. Zoltán Dörnyei (University of Nottingham), Dr Maggie Kubanyiova (University of Birmingham) and Dr Ema Ushioda (University of Warwick) at the second event; and Jo Leech (Anglia Ruskin University), Taguhi Sahakyan (University of Leeds), Dr Christine Muir (University of Nottingham) and Dr Martin Edwardes (Kings College London) at the third event. The authors highlight the need for such a forum, where researchers and practitioners can share developing understandings in the fast-moving field of L2 motivation research, and they look forward to the fostering of future research synergies in this area.

### Outreach

As always, teacher research has been at the centre of the work of our SIG and over the last few years, IATEFL ReSIG has been involved in events around the world which demystify research and encourage teachers to engage in research which is of direct relevance to their working contexts. Our first article in this section features Eric Ekembe and Sheila Fonjong (CAMELTA –

Cameroon), who report on recent activities of the CAMELTA Research Group; these activities have centred around investigating research questions initially put together in 2013, thanks to seed-funding from ReSIG.

Next, in an interview with Deborah Bullock, Richard Smith (University of Warwick), traces the origins of the *International Festival of Teacher-research in ELT*, an event which was launched at the IATEFL conference in Glasgow in 2017 and which will come to a temporary closure with the 2018 EVO for 'Classroom-based research for professional development.' The festival was a unique opportunity to showcase the range of teacher-led research projects from around the world, with particular focus on the work of teachers in otherwise difficult circumstances.

### Review of publications

In this issue, we offer three reviews. First, Sabine Mendes Moura (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio)) offers a comprehensive review of Hanks, J. (2017) *Exploratory Practice in Language Teaching: puzzling about principles and practices*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Sabine describes this volume as an approachable insider's view of exploratory practice practitioners from around the world, and feels that the volume does an important job of stimulating further puzzling in this area.

This is followed by a review of Issue 64 of *Research Notes* on the impact of creativity on teaching practices in which Michael Riskus (Khalifa University of Science and Technology) draws readers into his personal reflections on the link between creativity in the classroom and action research, a theme which runs through the articles reviewed.

Finally, Jhon Cuesta Medina (University of South Florida) offers a comprehensive review of Gkonou, C., Daubney, M., & Dewaele, J. M. (Eds.). (2017). *New insights into language anxiety: Theory, research and educational implications*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Multilingual Matters. Jhon explains that the volume reconceptualises language anxiety research as well as offering an overview of this construct.

We hope you enjoy reading these high-quality contributions and consider submitting yours for the next issue of *ELT Research*.

With warm wishes,

Mark Wyatt, Harry Kuchah Kuchah and Ana Inés Salvi  
March 2018

# A note from the coordinators

Welcome to another issue of **ELT Research**. We are delighted that a new issue of the newsletter is out! This is a high quality publication and we would like to thank the editors for their hard work in putting together so many interesting articles, reports and reviews on ELT research, most of which have resulted from ReSIG activities.

As you know we have recently taken up the new role of Joint Coordinators and thus would like to thank our former Joint Coordinators, Sarah Mercer and Daniel Xerri, for their dedicated work in the ReSIG in the last three years. We wish them the best in their future careers. We aim to jointly continue developing the ReSIG in all its endeavours, involving everyone, teachers, students, educators, teacher trainers, and academics, in discussions of, and in learning about and doing, ELT research.

In the past year the SIG has once more been prolific in its activities and we are delighted to let you know a bit more about them in this column.

As you know on top of the newsletter, the ReSIG has also been publishing **books** that have been developed from ReSIG online discussions and events, which are all available [freely online](http://resig.weebly.com/books.html) (<http://resig.weebly.com/books.html>). The past year has seen the publications of two innovative books: [Developing as an EFL Researcher: Stories from the Field](#), edited by Siân Etherington and Mark Daubney (2017), and [Developing Insights into Teacher-research](#), edited by Anne Burns, Kenan Dikilitas, Richard Smith and Mark Wyatt (2017).

We have recently held various thought-provoking webinars and online discussions. Regarding **webinars**, first, Emily Edwards held a webinar on 'Getting started with action research'. If you were unable to attend it, both the [recording of the webinar](#) and [Emily's powerpoint slides \(as pdf\)](#) are available on our website. Second, Russell Stannard, Julia Huettner and Thom Kiddle led a webinar on 'Video in English Language Teacher Education'. Third, Judith Hanks led a webinar on '*Exploratory Practice: integrating research and pedagogy in English for Academic Purposes*', which is part of the [International Festival of Teacher-research in ELT](#). If you were unable to attend it, both the webinar recording and Judith's PowerPoint slides are available on our website. In our next webinar Steve Mann and Steve Walsh will be talking about 'Reflective tools for teacher development'. It will be held on March 19th 2018 at 2pm GMT. For further information please visit our website: <http://resig.weebly.com/reflective-tools-for-teacher-development.html>

We have also had two inspiring **online discussions** this year. First, Mark Wyatt and Martin Lamb led a discussion on 'Language Teacher Motivation', and second, Bee Bond, Kenan Dikilitaş and Judith Hanks led a discussion on 'Exploratory Practice in English for Academic Purposes'. We would like to make the best of this opportunity to thank Mark Wyatt for organising and moderating fabulous online discussions in the past few years. He has stepped down from this position but will continue working with us on our newsletter! We look forward to continuing holding high-quality discussions on ELT research in the year ahead, and welcoming ideas for online discussions from you. Remember that everyone, members and non-members alike, are welcome to join these yahoo group discussions.

Regarding **face-to-face events**, the ReSIG featured powerful presentations at last year's 51<sup>st</sup> IATEFL Conference and ReSIG Pre-Conference Event, in Glasgow. In the Pre-Conference Event, Friederike Klippel and Richard Smith led a successful workshop on 'Researching ELT History: A Hands-on Workshop', and the Research SIG Day brought together seven interesting presentations by Judith Hanks, Robert Cooper, Clare Furneaux, Stephanie Aldred, Ella Ait-Zaouit, Loreto Aliaga, and Chris Edgoose.

Over the year since April 2017, the ReSIG was also a principal supporter of the International Festival of Teacher-research in ELT (Chair: Richard Smith; Honorary President: David Nunan). Full details of all the Festival events are available at this website: <https://trfestival.wordpress.com/>. In the past IATEFL conference, the Symposium on 'Teacher-research for difficult circumstances' was the first event which forms part of this festival, and included the following papers: 'Four years of exploratory action research in Chile: taking stock' by Richard Smith & Paula Rebolledo, 'Teacher Research 2.0' by Michelle Evans & Asli Lidice Gokturk Saglam, 'Teacher association research in Cameroon: recent developments' by Harry Kuchah, and 'Children's voice and choice in Indian English classrooms' by Annamaria Pinter & Rama Mathew.

This year on 9 April the ReSIG and LASIG are holding a joint Pre-Conference Event at the IATEFL Conference in Brighton, entitled 'Learner autonomy and practitioner research'. The event features two plenaries by Phil Benson and Judith Hanks, and 16 poster presentations. Check the programme and abstracts on our website (<http://resig.weebly.com/pre-conference-event-9-april-2018.html>). Each year we also offer a £200 scholarship to ReSIG members to attend the PCE.

On 11 April is the ReSIG showcase day at the IATEFL Conference in Brighton, which features no fewer than five talks and two interactive workshops on a range of

research themes by speakers from diverse contexts. [Read more about the speakers and topics.](#)

The **ReSIG** has supported **ELT-research events around the world**, in Cameroon, Kenya, India, Chile, Argentina, Cyprus and Turkey. In Turkey, the Annual Teacher Research Conference has been supported consistently for the past four years. This year the conference will be held on 8-9 June at Bahçeşehir University in İstanbul. Please consider attending! We have also been supporting an Annual Teachers Research! Conference in Latin America, for two years. In October 2017, a local teacher and mentor development program at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) in northern Cyprus was supported, and for the past two years, the [TESOL EVO \(Electronic Village Online\)](#) Classroom-based research for professional development project has been supported, with great success.

We usually offer **scholarships** for participation in events. Recent winners include English language teachers and researchers at University of Catamarca (UNCa), Argentina, for participation in the Second Annual Latin American Conference on teacher research in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2017; and a school teacher and teacher educator in Chile then an MA student in the UK, for participation in the Teachers Research! Conference in İstanbul in 2017.

As you know, we are on **social media**, Facebook (IATEFL Research SIG) and twitter (@IATEFLReSig), where we announce and publicize forthcoming online discussions, webinars and events. We have recently developed links with [Teachers Research!](#) Facebook group administered by Kenan Dikilitaş and Richard Smith.

We are happy to announce that we currently have 246 members and a large and active [committee](#) of 13 members. We look forward to continuing expanding our membership and growing as a community of practice. Please get in touch to share your ideas and take part in this SIG!

Finally, let us wish you a very happy and richly productive 2018!

**Ana Inés Salvi** and **Kenan Dikilitaş**, Research SIG joint coordinators



# Twenty Years and Counting: The Enduring Appeal of Language Teacher Cognition

**Simon Borg, ELT Consultant**

I can trace the origins of my interest in language teacher cognition (defined at that time as teachers' beliefs, knowledge, thinking and related unobservable dimensions of teaching) back to the mid-1990s. At that time, such work was only just beginning to appear in our field. Over 20 years later, understanding teacher cognition and how it relates to teacher development and teachers' classroom practices is a well-established focus for both research and practice in the field of L2 teacher education. In this reflective account, I revisit my entry into this domain of research and the trajectory my work on teacher cognition has taken since then.

In 1994 I started a PhD. I was interested in teacher education and grammar teaching (a topic I had also explored in my Master's dissertation a few years earlier) but at that early stage teacher cognition was not a concept I had come across and it took the best part of a year for me to reach two important realisations:

1. despite a huge literature on L2 grammar teaching and learning, including much advice on what teachers could or should do, next to nothing had been published about what teachers actually did and why;
2. in education generally, teacher cognition had already been a focus of research for 20 years (though that actual term was rarely used in the literature – teacher thinking and teacher knowledge were the dominant concepts at that time).

Building on these insights, understanding not just how teachers teach grammar but also the cognitions that shape their instructional decisions became the focus of my doctoral research. My work at the time was inevitably influenced quite strongly by the educational literature more generally. However, towards the mid-1990s publications of increasing relevance also started appearing in our field (for example, Freeman & Richards, 1996; Woods, 1996). Such work raised the profile of teacher cognition as a concept; it also illustrated (mostly qualitatively) different ways in which teacher cognition could be studied; and, additionally, it demonstrated the important role that insight into the unobservable

dimensions of teachers' lives could play in enhancing L2 teacher education.

Towards the end of that decade my own qualitative work on language teacher cognition (based on the PhD) also started to appear (for example, Borg, 1998; 1999a). These analyses of L2 grammar teaching were important in a number of ways (for a discussion, see Borg, 1999b); they were among the earliest qualitative studies of teachers' practices and cognitions; they appeared in leading journals and were thus widely read; they focused on grammar teaching and not grammar learning, addressing to some extent a significant imbalance in the literature on L2 acquisition generally; and they illustrated the value of detailed qualitative studies of teachers' work, particularly through a combination of extensive observations and semi-structured interviews.

Breakthroughs in research are often a matter of felicitous timing and in that respect I was lucky. In the late 1990s the field of applied linguistics was very ready for the kinds of interpretive research on teacher cognition I was doing. The fact that my focus was on grammar teaching (an enduring topic of empirical and practical interest in our field) was also an advantage, and through a detailed analysis of five EFL teachers I was able to shed light on various dimensions of their work such as how they presented grammar, their use of grammar practice activities and their approaches to corrective feedback. Going beyond descriptions of how they taught grammar, though, this early work delved deeply into why they taught grammar in the ways they did. Though commonplace today, such work was novel 20 years ago.

Going beyond my original focus on grammar teaching, in 2003, a review paper in the journal *Language Teaching* (Borg, 2003) examined all the relevant L2 literature available at the time on teacher cognition and did much to further raise the profile of this line of research, as did the book *Teacher cognition and language education* (Borg, 2006). I have (as have many others) continued to research L2 teacher cognition, applying it to a range of issues such as learner autonomy and research engagement. The latter was a major focus of my work between 2002 and 2013, culminating in the publication of *Teacher research in language teaching: A critical analysis* (Borg, 2013), a book-length analysis drawing on a series of studies linked by an interest in understanding what 'research' meant to language teachers. This work had been stimulated by periodic observations in academia lamenting teachers' lack of interest in reading and doing research. I had always found such criticisms unfair and teacher cognition provided a useful vehicle to examine what research meant to teachers and if and how they engaged both with it (through reading) and in it (by doing it). My more practical focus on supporting teacher research in recent years (for example, Borg, 2017) has been heavily influenced by the deeper understandings of how teachers conceptualise 'research' that I derived from my research on this topic.

The work I have done on learner autonomy has been less extensive (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017) but it was again stimulated by a clear gap in the volume of theoretical and methodological literature that is available on this issue and our understandings of what it means to teachers and how they interpret and implement it in the context of their work. It has been interesting to see this line of work taken up elsewhere, most notably in the collection of papers in Barnard and Li (2015), where teachers' understandings of learner autonomy are explored in several east Asian contexts. The motivation for such research remains the belief that how we approach L2 teacher education can only be enhanced by better understandings of what is going on 'under the hood' in teachers' professional lives.

Teacher cognition is now very well-established as a domain of inquiry in language teaching and it is interesting to reflect on its enduring appeal. Twenty years ago, as noted above, novelty was certainly one reason – examining language teachers' mental lives was wholly new. While that is no longer the case, other original reasons for teacher cognition's continuing popularity remain true today: for example, it helps us understand how teachers learn, reveals the basis for their instructional decisions, and explains their reactions to educational innovation. The practical value of such insights has been widely recognised by teacher educators and those in charge of educational reform. The field continues to develop theoretically (see, for example, Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015) and the scope of teacher cognition research has now gone beyond obviously cognitive issues to also include important dimensions of teachers' lives such as identity, emotion and teacher motivation. And while I continue to be critical (Borg, 2018) of work which studies teacher cognition for its own sake (without making any obvious contribution to knowledge or practice) I would expect interest in the unobservable dimensions of language teachers' lives to persist for many years to come. Ultimately, teacher cognition is at the core of what it means to become, be and develop as a language teaching professional.

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# Getting interested in the psychology of language learning and teaching: Sarah Mercer reflects

## *How it all started*

It started in the classroom. I began my career as a language teacher and, indeed, I still see myself very much as a teacher at heart. In my classes, I was inherently interested in my learners as people and in how they were experiencing language learning inside and outside of class. I soon realised that the learners themselves were instrumental in the relative success (or not) of their language learning. I was beginning to appreciate just how important the psychology of the learner is for learning outcomes, both directly and indirectly. I could see it in their motivation, fears, confidence, beliefs, and ways of engaging with the learning opportunities around them. So, although I could intuitively see that psychology was key to what was happening in my classes and in my learners, I did not feel especially well versed in this dimension of language teaching. In my case, (and I fear for many others too), my teacher training had focused on the language itself or specific methods and resources, but I had little to no understanding of what makes learners tick and how we can best foster the right kind of mental state to facilitate learning. And so began my personal quest to better understand language learners as people with thoughts, feelings, motives, needs, and wants; all of which they bring to their learning and generate from their experiences with learning.

## *The starting point: Strategies*

I actually started by looking at the kinds of strategies that learners used. I began with an experiential approach to strategy training and I used some informal interviews and questionnaires to debrief at the end of the course. In these data, I became aware that it didn't seem to make sense to think of the effects of the course in linguistic terms, but rather the learners were talking about feeling more empowered, confident, and motivated. As I searched the literature to find a term to capture what they were describing, I came across the construct of self-efficacy, which has frequently been researched in connection with strategies. This refers to the kind of expectancy beliefs a learner has about whether they think they could or could not complete a specific task. And so, that is how it all started. However, I found myself wanting to know more about how they saw themselves as language learners, not only in the narrowly defined way that self-efficacy captures but, more broadly, and

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## About the author

Simon Borg has been involved in English language teaching for 30 years, working as a teacher, teacher educator, lecturer, researcher and consultant in a range of international contexts. Simon is recognised internationally for his work on teacher cognition, professional development and teacher research. He works as an ELT consultant, with a particular focus on designing, facilitating and evaluating language teacher professional development programmes. Full details of his work are available at <http://simon-borg.co.uk/>

this is how I became interested in self-concept, which remains one of my key areas of interest for both learners and teachers.

#### *Researching self-concept*

The first thing that anyone notices when they start looking into self-constructs is the mess of interconnected terms that exist. At the outset, it can be rather overwhelming as they all refer to slightly different facets of the self and are often connected to certain epistemological ways of viewing the world and human psychology. My own views are very much hybrid in character stemming from work across the two disciplines of psychology and language learning. Having begun with self-efficacy, which is strongly cognitive and tied to more quantitative work, I then searched for a construct which was more broadly defined and which incorporated an affective dimension too and that led me to look at self-concept. This construct describes how somebody sees their competences and evaluates these in affective terms in respect to a specific domain. The domain can be that of language learning or ELT specifically or even speaking in English. Naturally, all these domain-specific self-concepts are interconnected with each other in complex, dynamic and potentially highly personal ways. As my background is deeply rooted in applied linguistics, I also viewed psychological constructs such as self-concept as being unequivocally situated in social contexts. In fact, I never accepted the division between psychological and social perspectives. Instead, I sought to work from an integrated approach, which took a psychosocial view of learners. We do not function in the world without our psychology being involved. This means our psychology is not only defining how we experience and interact in the world but is also influenced by the world around us. In empirical terms, this also led me to more qualitative approaches that I felt allowed me to better capture some of this situated complexity and diversity in learners' self-concepts.

#### *Working with complexity theory*

It was somehow natural that in integrating the inner and outer worlds of an individual and seeing their tight interconnections, I began to take an interest in complexity theory. Complexity perspectives are quite diverse in their detail but, essentially, what unites them is a sense that context is part of any system, many things interconnect in a system, and you cannot understand some things by breaking them down into ever smaller component parts. Complexity perspectives recognise that, in some case, the whole of a thing is often qualitatively more than the sum of its parts. This means that when we split certain things into separate parts, we lose some of the whole system's essential qualities and character. Complexity seeks to retain that holistic character as far as is realistically possible. Naturally, such a perspective has implications for research designs. All research necessitates some simplification of reality to make it manageable in empirical terms, but, from a complexity perspective, a researcher actively

seeks to keep some sense of the whole. The decision on how to set boundaries round the system for research purposes is not made in terms of hypothetically defined constructs, but, instead, is made in terms of what parts of the system seem to 'function as a whole' (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). For me, working with complexity has opened up new ways of looking at the familiar and helped me to better appreciate just how situated our psychologies are in time and space. I have become more sensitised to dynamics on different timescales as well as the web of relationships in which we find ourselves. It is by no means the only lens through which we should be viewing psychology and it will not suit everyone or every topic. Indeed, the field would be much poorer if we all viewed things the same way, but, for me, it has been incredibly enriching to engage with this theoretical lens in my work and I feel it has taken my thinking forward in unexpected ways.

#### *Where my work is taking me now*

One of the things that complexity perspectives drew my attention to was the interconnection between teacher and learner psychology. Both influence each other, so teachers affect the psychologies of their learners and, indeed, their own psychologies are affected by those of their learners: they are two sides of the same coin. However, what I realised when I started searching through the literature in the field was that although there was a notable body of work on two key areas of teacher psychology, cognitions and identities, other areas of teacher psychology, including the huge field of motivation, were woefully under-researched in SLA. When you compare the amount of work in terms of breadth and depth that has been conducted on various aspects of language learner psychology with that on language teacher psychology, you realise there is a huge imbalance. As key stakeholders in the language learning process, perhaps particularly influential in shaping language learner psychology, it is amazing that we know so little about what makes language teachers tick and how we can best support them in their professional roles. As a result, much of my recent work focuses on language teachers and their psychologies, particularly in terms of wellbeing. Recently, my colleague, Achilleas Kostoulas, and I have had the great privilege of working with some great scholars from the field in putting together an edited collection on teacher psychology, which we hope will inspire more work in the field. However, there is so much still to do and we are only just beginning to scratch the surface of this underexplored area. Yet, given high rates of teacher burnout and attrition across educational contexts, I strongly feel that there is an urgent need to put language teacher psychology high on the research agenda.

#### *Advice I would give to early-career stage academics beginning to conduct research in ELT*

Follow your heart. You know the expression - if you find a job you love, you will never have to work a day in your

life. I remain passionate and excited about the field of language learning and teaching psychology. I am fortunate to find myself constantly learning new things through my work and dialogue with others. I consider myself exceptionally lucky to be able to research a field that fascinates me and is highly relevant to my real world concerns as an educator. There are many ways to create a career, but I truly think that the best thing you can do is to research something that you are absolutely passionate about and where you never cease to want to learn more. That way, you will keep your enthusiasm, continually grow as a scholar, and never get bored!

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## Biodata

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# Think-aloud Protocols in Researching EFL Creative Writing

**Katja Težak, University of Maribor and University of Graz**

## What is creativity and why investigate it?

Researching EFL students' creativity in their writing by using think-aloud protocols is a complex and fascinating endeavour. Creativity has been defined in various ways, e.g. by Cropley (2001), who refers to it as useful innovation, and by Amabile (1996), who views it as a process comprised of different stages. I see creativity as a complex cognitive and emotive process of identifying, as well as solving, a problem through a myriad of intertwined cognitive and emotional processes, in order to produce something new, surprising, useful and/or valuable.

Creativity has seen a dramatic rise in interest and has begun to appear frequently in educational policies and curricula (Sharp & Le Metais, 2000) and has been viewed as key for transforming education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Robinson & Aronica, 2016). In this article, I will discuss using verbal or think-aloud protocols for researching emotions experienced during a creative writing task with tertiary-level EFL students. I collected data using verbal protocols and, in this article, I will explain what these are, what they are typically used for, their strengths and drawbacks, and what I did to counteract the drawbacks.

## Think-aloud protocols

Think-aloud protocols are a learner's comments recorded while (s)he completes a task. They have been used in a wide range of fields such as psychology, L1 and L2 research and translation and are now recognised as a major source of data on subjects' cognitive processes on specific tasks (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). Their typical use involves documenting and tracing thought processes and emotional states of participants involved in a study, allowing participants to directly share what goes on inside their minds.

The two main categories of verbal reports are concurrent think-aloud protocols and retrospective reports. As their names indicate, the first type involves the participants talking about their thoughts and emotions during the observed task, and the second involves participants reporting after the task is completed. Critical discussions about the retrospective report type concern the challenge with veridicality because there is a risk of the studied subjects forgetting what they were thinking about by the time they have to explain their thought processes or emotional states. Gass and Mackey (2000) propose a minimising of data loss via only short delays between tasks and verbalization. An alternative strategy is by recording and videotaping the participants and thus enabling them to see their performance and remember their thought process, providing prompts for remembering so to speak, which is commonly referred to as stimulated recall.

In order to avoid veridicality loss, the concurrent think-aloud protocol was chosen. However, these are affected by their own problems. Concurrent think-alouds are faced with the problem of loss of flow during data collection because the prompting and reporting during data collection disturb any activity participants may be doing. There is also a risk of loss of data if the prompting intervals are too far apart. In order to address these concerns, participants should have a training activity in which they get used to expressing their emotions and thoughts while writing, as it is not an everyday occurrence, and a carefully balanced timing of the prompting based on the circumstances and the participants of the study. For the present study, the training activity involved the volunteers writing a short paragraph about an imaginary friend they have created

in their minds; they were prompted twice during the writing in order to get used to the think-aloud process.

## The study

The study in which the think-alouds were used was designed to investigate student engagement on task; student engagement has three components, namely cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Renschly & Christenson, 2012).

The participants in this pilot study were two tertiary level volunteer English students from a university in Slovenia (C1 to C2 level). They were seated individually in a room with the researcher, who was never their teacher or assessor, and were given instructions to write a one-page continuation story of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* from the perspective of the protagonist's husband. They were told that they would have sixty minutes for the task. (This task was chosen because the students had read this particular story in one of their university literature classes and it seemed like an excellent prompt to use for creative writing as it is a very ambiguous and peculiar story.)

The students started planning and writing their short story in English. While writing, they were prompted in seven-minute intervals by the researcher to report on how they were feeling. They were given the option of using their mother tongue to respond to prompts; however, both chose to report in English. The entire process was filmed and the data were later transcribed for data analysis.

The participants were of course notified of the fact that they would be filmed and agreed to it voluntarily. They were also, orally and via email, informed about all the details of the study weeks in advance before the data collection, and were informed that they could withdraw anytime they wished, up to the point of publication. They also signed a consent form.

I made a deliberate decision to prompt at seven-minute intervals because I believe that if the "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) of creating something is left unobserved for too long, given its complexity, then much of the detailed insights into these processes may get lost. In fact, there are so many decisions involved in planning and writing a short story that any other approach seemed to present a substantial risk for data loss. On the other hand, I chose to leave sufficient time between prompts so as not to excessively disturb their writing processes and also perhaps negatively affect their motivation on the task. If the prompting becomes too frequent, we run the risk of creating a too disturbing and too frustrating environment for the participants.

## The advantages and disadvantages of think-aloud protocols

Although the participants appeared to be able to do their writing and report on their emotions every seven

minutes, one participant did state that it was making the task more challenging, and caused a disruption to their work flow. The disruption of flow with verbal protocols is more or less inevitable. If we want to concurrently observe something such as emotions during the process of writing, some disruption will be unavoidable. However, it did highlight the issue of timing and I concluded that care should be taken not to make the prompting intervals too frequent. Both participants occasionally commented on the fact that they had not even realized that seven minutes had already passed, because they were engrossed in the work flow. That points to the fact that prompting should not be done too frequently in order not to disturb them too much, but frequently enough to access sufficient diverse data points.

There was also the challenge of ascertaining whether participants were reporting their feelings accurately. However, it is exactly the students' perspectives that I was trying to uncover. A possible, albeit limited, way to counter this problem is to observe participants and challenge them with questions if their body language and facial expressions appear at odds with the self-reported emotion. During the think-alouds, I took care to observe whether there appeared to be any discrepancies between reported emotions and facial expressions and body language. I also paid attention to the participants' use of words such as "relaxed", "ok with the task", "I'm happy with my writing", etc. and then any potential tension in the body or the facial features, or tone of voice. Even on re-watching the video, I did not find any discrepancies and the students did not report any explicitly, but it was still of importance to check to ensure the validity of the data.

Interestingly, more positively, both participants did report liking doing the think-alouds because they said it allowed them to hear and reflect on some of their own emotional states and become aware of them. As an educator and researcher, I felt this process of self-observation, self-discovery and self-awareness could be valuable for future learning. If they are able to observe themselves while expressing their emotions during a task, they themselves might draw conclusions for their own learning and possibly improve their creative processes accordingly. This suggests possible benefits for the participants and might be explored more in further research.

Thinking aloud also allowed the participants to share pride in their developing plots and solving plot problems or coming up with an idea they were pleased with, and both participants later pointed out that those incidents of overcoming plot problems made them more motivated to continue writing. They stated that they felt happy when they knew which step to put in the story next, as that would bring them closer to successfully completing the task, so they had clear motivation to complete the task and this was enhanced by a sense of progress as they got one step closer to achieving their goal.

One more observation from the data was the connection between the writing process and a sense of amusement at oneself. One of the participants reported that one of the characters in her writing was based on everything she would want to be but is not, and she reported that she finds it amusing that she did that. This again points to the fact that the process of self-reflection during a think-aloud activity brought forth a positive emotional response in a participant, which definitely speaks for the usage of think-alouds.

## Conclusion

Think-aloud protocols are a tool that can generate useful insights into the emotional and also cognitive processes of our students. However, they are not without their difficulties, which include potential disturbance of flow in the students' work progress and the actuality of their self-reported emotions. In my opinion, the length of intervals should be tailored to the specific task in which the data are collected; the process should be piloted to see how much of a disturbance the actual prompting and reporting presents in a given research situation.

Nevertheless, my study has helped me gain fresh perspectives on the students' engagement during a creative writing task, and the participants themselves had a predominantly positive response to doing a think-aloud. I feel they can be a useful tool for gathering interesting data about students' emotional and cognitive states and processes, and they can also benefit the participants taking part in them as well, through enhanced task-related metacognition.

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# IATEFL Glasgow 2017: a report from a research looking glass

Loreto Aliaga-Salas

## IATEFL from a research looking glass

IATEFL is one of the largest ELT conferences around the world. After attending it four times, I have noticed a research-oriented twist, informing classroom-based teacher research to large-scale, longitudinal projects. This shift in the nature of presentations, in my view, is towards a context-based informed teaching and learning. In this paper, I focus on the 51<sup>st</sup> IATEFL international conference held between April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2017. This conference gathered over 2500 delegates attending from over the world, and featured 500 presentations, forums, and posters.

This paper is structured under three core themes/sections. I first focus on researching the history of ELT – as discussed in the IATEFL ReSIG Pre-Conference Event (PCE). I continue with teacher research – delving into the Research SIG day and the symposium on teacher-research in difficult circumstances. Next, I explore the plenary presentations from a research perspective. I finish with a summary of the key messages explored in this paper and conference.

## Research SIG Pre Conference Event: Understanding where ELT comes from

The IATEFL ReSIG pre-conference event, named “Researching ELT History: A Hands-on Workshop” was led by Friederike Klippel and Richard Smith. Through this workshop, Klippel and Smith covered multiple angles of the development of ELT over the years for teachers, with the purpose of understanding the way ELT has been shaped and reshaped over time. Through the examination and discussion of different historical documents and classroom materials, they evidenced how different socio-political contexts influence the design and decision-making behind classroom teaching. The workshop leaders emphasised the importance of leaving a trace of past and current developments of ELT for teachers and decision-makers, including: material design and production, pre- and in-service teacher education programmes, language-related educational policies and curriculum reforms. By creating and maintaining records of how a context has changed through the years, ELT actors can historically situate their practices, beliefs, and decisions. This workshop made me particularly aware of

how the local history of a country can influence the decision-making and how material makers react to or address the local context and the rapid changes in the world. Reviewing how locally-designed classroom materials and policies have changed through time reveals the decision-makers’ underpinning philosophies of education. That hidden agenda influences beliefs and attitudes to the teaching and learning of English, and the way teachers teach in the classroom.

## The Research SIG day

The IATEFL Research SIG day showcased a wide variety of research types and methodologies, seven papers in total. I will focus on three presentations, featuring exploratory practice, portrait methodology, and genre analysis, respectively.

Judith Hanks presented on exploratory practice, where teachers and learners act as co-researchers. In this workshop, she engaged the audience to explore their own classrooms to raise questions they were puzzled about, e.g. classroom management, student motivation, and language skills development. A crucial insight gained from Hanks’s presentation is the understanding of EP as a joint enterprise by teachers and learners to improve the quality of life in the classroom. EP is a power-sharing activity, which challenges both learners and teachers to assume a new dimension of their relationship in the classroom: In this exploration, they share trust and agency. Likewise, they embark on a hands-on and approachable perspective of research – learning by doing, rather than ‘studying’ research, to the benefit of all the actors involved in the teaching and learning process.

Ella Ait-Zaouit introduced a new concept to me: portrait methodology (Bottery et al., 2008). This is a qualitative approach where the participant (in this case, a novice English language teacher) engages with the researcher in in-depth interviews. Participants transform their conversations into a written portrait with the objective of developing a sense of identity – represented in their own portraits. Through the conversations, participants unveil their identities from cultural, historical, and institutional perspectives, to discover their ideal, expected, and actual selves.

Robert Cooper presented on the analysis of genre features of published language teacher research. Through his state-of-the-art analysis, he showed that 70% of published research on teacher education has been written by academics at universities, i.e. research reports *about* teachers, but not written *by* teachers or *with* teachers. His research suggests that publications indicate assumptions *about* teaching practices, without consulting teachers. He concludes by questioning the purpose of publishing research if it is not known or used by teachers. From Cooper’s presentation, critical questions are raised for anyone doing and publishing research in education: Who are the users of published

research? How can one ensure that research is relevant for those intended to use it, or for those referred to by that research? How does one make research accessible and transferrable to the classroom context, and most importantly, to the enhancement of teaching and learning?

### ReSIG Symposium on Teacher-research in difficult circumstances

The IATEFL ReSIG also organised a forum on teacher-research in difficult circumstances, as part of [The International Festival of Teacher-Research in ELT \(ReSIG, 2017\)](#). This forum consisted of five presentations reporting on projects conducted in Chile, India, Cameroon, and reflections on the TESOL Electronic Village Online (EVO) project carried out with teachers worldwide. All these schemes shared concomitant issues about teacher-led research, such as limited support, time, and research knowledge.

These projects, nevertheless, led to share positive and encouraging results: increased teacher motivation, agency, and empowerment, changed mind-sets, and have been disseminated at local, national, and international conferences, and promoted worldwide through the use of social media and some free publications.

To me, the most striking presentation was Annamaria Pinter's on children as co-researchers. This British Council funded ELTRP project (2015-16) looked into teachers and children working as co-researchers in the Indian primary and secondary school classroom. With 800 children and 20 teachers, this project consisted of three layers: children as co-researchers, teachers researching their contexts, and facilitators researching teacher development. Children got involved by making choices, attending conferences, and reporting on their becoming researchers. This involvement resulted in empowered and committed students making changes and giving suggestions, and having an active voice in their own learning. Similarly, teachers reported increasing their research understanding, learning to document their practices, and transforming their classrooms into rich spaces for learning, despite being under-resourced. Including children as researchers is a novelty in ELT. It is not researching *about* children, but giving children and co-researching teachers, the agency and empowerment to be active researchers of their own classrooms. This experience embedded a change of teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards their children; it demonstrated teachers' high commitment to their own learners, and most importantly, it showed that teachers believed in them. As a cutting-edge experience, I believe that this research demonstrates how important learners' voices are, no matter their age or circumstances.

The symposium on teacher research in difficult circumstances suggests that teacher research has

become more approachable. The experiences of teachers engaging in research indicates that they are understanding their classroom contexts in more depth, and are more confident about sharing their concerns and successes with other actors. There seems to be paradigm shift for both teachers and learners in understanding the classroom as a shared space for enquiry and learning. The same challenges, however, are still present in all contexts: lack of time, support, and knowledge, which could prevent teacher research from becoming a sustainable and inner motivated practice.

### The conference plenaries

From this year's plenaries, I have chosen to reflect on Díaz Maggioli's session on professional development (PD), Sarah Mercer's understanding of the psychologies of learners and teachers, and J.J. Wilson's social justice and ELT.

Gabriel Díaz Maggioli referred to the importance of PD, and explored different modalities to cater to a diversity of contexts and resources. Díaz Maggioli emphasised the critical role that PD plays in teachers' lives, tailored for the specific needs of a community. He described a major weakness of PD: the 'one size fits all' approach, in which there is no needs assessment to inform what sort of PD teachers require for their individual context. According to a survey he implemented worldwide, teachers reported that PD is usually disconnected from the classroom, too short with no follow up, too theoretical, under-supported and inapplicable.

Furthermore, formal PD cannot be accessed by everyone. Some teachers do not have the resources nor the time to attend or get involved in PD opportunities, or a local network. Sometimes conferences attendance fees are prohibitive. Nevertheless, motivated teachers can take advantage of free online resources, such as webinars, online discussions, and blogs, to keep up-to-date and engaged with the field and professional community.

Díaz Maggioli suggests that PD needs to be job embedded, and provided a comprehensive list of options, e.g. exploratory action research, peer lesson study, learning circles, mentoring, professional portfolios, and dialogue journals, while aware that not these may not be feasible in all contexts. He concluded the plenary by inviting the audience to take action about their own PD in their context, e.g. by sharing the strategies with colleagues, pilot a small-scale program, start a discussion about embedding PD in their context, and create a new PD strategy and share it with other teachers.

Sarah Mercer's plenary focused on understanding the psychologies of learners and teachers. Mercer explored the language classroom as a space for connection and engagement between them. Mercer put well-being at the centre in a way which the audience could relate to. She

referred to an ‘emotional bank account’ as a symbol representing those teachers who nurture – deposit - positive relationships, based on three tenets: working on mutual trust and respect; being empathetic and understanding with students; and being responsive to each learner.

She also warned about the burnout cascade and stress that teaching implies. She invited the audience to reflect on how teachers can manage stress by prioritising areas to pay attention to, so stress does not hinder one’s performance or damage relationships. I believe that Mercer’s take home message is powerful. As teachers, we cannot pour from an empty cup. Looking after ourselves is part of being a good teacher, and prioritising our well-being needs to be at the top of our list. This facilitates positive relationships between teachers and learners.

J.J. Wilson’s plenary was titled “ELT and social opportunities in a time of chaos”. Following Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), Wilson talked about the critical role that education plays in transforming people’s lives by creating instances of dialogue, awareness raising and empowerment. Freire uses the concept of banking in education, in a metaphor where teachers deposit information on students, without processing or questioning it. By taking a social justice approach, issues of relevance for the local context are brought into the classroom to be discussed among learners and teachers.

After re-watching the session, I noticed that Wilson did not really explore social justice issues in depth. Although he did raise some critical situations, e.g. through an ‘I wonder’ exercise where the audience had to react to images, e.g. ‘I wonder what materials they use’, he did not analyse the issues intended to be raised in the pictures, making the discussion somehow superficial. To the same extent, I believe that the practical examples that he provided about how to implement social justice in the classroom were of a somehow ‘tip-based’ nature, without providing sustainable tools to be used by teachers in their daily practice.

To my surprise, only a small minority of the audience present indicated they were acquainted with Paulo Freire or his work. I believe that Wilson’s plenary managed to introduce a very wide audience to an author who is indeed worth reading, understanding, and most importantly, following in the classroom. Despite my criticisms above, I believe that Wilson’s talk triggered some reflection on the ways that ELT can be a means of making a difference in learners’ lives by helping them becoming critical and active citizens.

## Final remarks

In conclusion, IATEFL from a research looking glass suggests how research has gained an important space in ELT discussion among practitioners at all levels. I

refer to practitioners with no distinction among researchers, teachers, academics, or learners. There are increasingly blurred boundaries among those who do the research, and more informal ways to disseminate it. There is greater sensitivity to contextual factors. Locally-informed practices, which are more meaningful, accessible, and useful, are increasingly being shared. At this conference, I noticed a social justice turn, where practitioner research emerges to empower all those involved in teaching and learning, and where language acts as a means to achieve transformation in the classroom, for and by learners and teachers.

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# Exploring three examples of language teacher research writing and how they resonate with me

Rob Cooper

When I first started conducting teacher research, I struggled to find compelling models written by other teachers. Much work in academic journals failed to engage with my teaching experience, while magazine accounts and blogs often simply described lesson ideas. This experience moulded my current PhD research, which focuses on understanding how written teacher inquiries might have an impact on other teachers. This builds from Burns' argument for Action Research's potential "resonance" with classroom practitioners in the wider community (2010:95), a claim which might also hold for other forms of teacher inquiry. I would argue that if teacher research is to have any broader impact, how this work is shared and communicated to other teachers must be examined critically. One element of this research involved a qualitative analysis of 168 teacher research accounts published across sixty websites, journals and magazines in 2015.

Here I will focus on three works from that sample which resonated with my teaching self. I use these examples to suggest that teacher research writing might successfully reach out to other teachers when it displays an exploratory stance which positions the teacher as an active learner, and when it avoids making direct recommendations to readers. Even though my doctoral research involves the exploration of teachers' response to teacher research writing, here I will largely present my personal response to three pieces of teacher research writing I selected for my study.

The first account, written by Ed Pegg, comes from the magazine *Modern English Teacher* and involves an observational walk around his classroom. This follows the Japanese business concept of "a Gemba walk", or workplace visit, which is summarised as "look and see" and then "ask why" (2015:26). Simply by observing, he identifies three classroom issues, the most compelling of which for me was his students' reliance upon prescribed lists of functional expressions, even though these occasionally sound inappropriate. Having found this, he does not act immediately, but probes further to better understand why his students choose to utilise a narrow range of familiar and apparently reliable expressions,

despite an apparently broad passive resource. By gathering this understanding, he avoids reactively trying to impose the 'right' expressions but actively works with his students to recognise contextually appropriate responses. He then concludes not by recommending that teachers should follow similar teaching practices, but rather by suggesting that all teachers can benefit from exploring their classrooms with open minds (Pegg, 2015:28).

Within this article, Pegg demonstrates how exploration is possible without an overt academic stance, and how this might subsequently provoke readers' reflections. Despite there being no formal research methodology, the writer takes the 'look and see' concept to heart, which leaves the reader with an overall impression of reflection, curiosity and openness. Pegg has no initial agenda, he does not seek to solve problems or establish best practices, he simply has the courage to openly wander (and wonder) about his classroom. Thus, where bald description of classroom actions might invite only evaluation of the writer's teaching practice, an active model of reflective inquiry draws readers into interpretations of their own teaching. The exploratory, inquiring stance of teacher-writers thus portrays both an act of genuine reflection from the writer, as well as a vital stimulus for readers' own reflections.

One strength of Pegg's work is his open-ended conclusion and subsequent refusal to impose ideas upon his readers. His explorations highlight pertinent classroom issues (Pegg, 2015:27), and the delicate balance between teaching banks of functional language and eliciting more natural, intuitive responses is perhaps familiar to many teachers. Crucially, though, Pegg's process of observing a classroom issue, and then openly puzzling over this before attempting to influence it, also spoke to my teaching experience. He leads us towards his adoption of a more responsive approach to teaching functional language by clearly illuminating the need this addresses and exploring its potential cause, but without experiencing any sudden revelations.

In my own class, my incomplete observations drive small, incremental changes in my teaching, not sudden spectacular change, which means I find Pegg's tinkering highly authentic and open to adaptation. His holistic view of teaching practice seems entirely sympathetic to suggestions that teaching is not simply a discrete collection of techniques but a highly selective, individual and contextualised practice (Mann, 2005:107). This conception of teaching demands that the writing teacher-researchers produce must enable their readers to selectively understand and appropriate their interventions, and should not expect blind, wholesale adoption. Pegg's work is an example of teacher research writing that does not simply dispense handy tips, but rather engages active classroom operators within a genuine dialogue.

The second account, from *ELT Research*, is Darren Elliott's consideration of teacher identity through the metaphors we use for our classroom role. A comic strip format allows the writer to address the reader in a directly dialogic style (Elliott, 2015:10), which represents a highly effective way of provoking engagement with this more abstract subject matter. However, as in Pegg's work, the reader is not provided with a concrete set of interpretations, simply more questions about the teacher's role. This perhaps represents the conscious rejection of an authoritative voice on teaching in order to stimulate thought and active engagement from the reader. By posing a question and not answering it, the writer invites readers to put something of themselves into the text. Such writers may successfully reach out to their audience as they are not portrayed as models to be emulated, but rather as active partners and peers.

Elliott's transformation of his research into a human narrative represents another crucial feature in its appeal and effectiveness. This narrative stance portrays the writer as a fully-formed character within his own story, and allows him to reveal uncertainty about the significance of these teaching metaphors to actual classroom practice (Elliott, 2015:13). This self-doubt is simply not possible where writers adopt more detached positions, and yet it perhaps mirrors the uncertainty we may occasionally feel in the classroom. In being willing to question how relevant his study is to teaching practice, Elliott presents himself as, above all, a fellow teacher. In order for writers of teacher research to build credibility with their readers, they may need to come before us as teachers, not as teachers in researchers' clothing. Doing so may prove essential if the writer is to build empathy and credibility with a teaching audience.

In the final work, Talandis and Stout's more conventional research article from *ELT Journal* engages with the familiar puzzle of encouraging spoken fluency in class (2015:14). Their Action Research model allows them to address students' perceived reluctance to speak through multiple interventions, which are adapted as deeper understandings emerge through observation, assessment and student feedback (Talandis & Stout, 2015:17). This flexibility encapsulates their desire to offer genuine support to their students, while their honesty about tensions between research and pedagogic concerns also rings true.

What I appreciate most here is the balance between research and pedagogic interests. Although my interest stemmed from a familiar Japanese university setting, this appeal is magnified by the study's foundation within an observed pedagogic issue rather than an abstract concern (Talandis & Stout, 2015:11-12). As with Pegg's interest in teaching functional language, the writers identify a profound teaching puzzle, which is apparently common across contexts, in students' apparent reluctance to speak. However, unlike Pegg, they frame this within a wider body of research, which provides

theoretical foundations for their interventions. Existing studies are drawn upon organically to support classroom practice, and yet never govern it (Talandis & Stout, 2015:14). This balance illustrates that theoretical and practical concerns need not be mutually exclusive within teacher research writing.

Despite a research orientation, Talandis and Stout take a visibly personal stake in their inquiry, thus helping readers to see them as active protagonists, and not detached experts. Personalised language, such as the sense that there was "more we could do" to support supposedly weaker students (Talandis & Stout, 2015:16), builds a sympathetic picture of a teaching peer, as does evidence of intuitive and responsive teaching decisions. Like Pegg, Talandis and Stout echo familiar teaching processes of observation, intervention and subsequent evaluation, though more formally in this case via their Action Research framework. These steps help to develop an empathetic relationship with the reader which is possible only when addressing them as peers rather than acting as figures of authority. The benefit of this bond is demonstrated by the fact that, even though they recommend specific teaching conversation strategies (Talandis & Stout, 2015:20), which conflicts with my own beliefs and practices, I was forced to challenge my own assumptions on this point rather than simply reject their arguments.

What sets these articles apart from others I have studied is their willingness to transcend conventions of established forms of writing by and for teachers. Many published teacher inquiries follow either the practical focus of teaching magazines, or the more theoretical orientation of peer-reviewed journals. However, as teachers are not embedded in the culture which supports traditional research writing, such material may have a limited resonance with their beliefs. At the same time, writing in magazines which simply describes teaching innovations may encourage blind application rather than thoughtful reflection. By simply replicating these established dominant conventions, I would suggest that we risk stifling the creation of new media for teacher research, and thus limiting its impact on other teachers. Conversely, the three articles presented here demonstrate the vibrancy of teacher research writing when it is not shackled by a prescribed format or tone.

The impact of any written account of practitioner inquiry on a diverse community of readers may be only partially within the writer's control, and yet writers could still deploy strategies to enhance this impact. Certain characteristics, such as an exploratory stance, are familiar forms of academic research writing. However, the apparent benefits of modelling reflection by acting as a potentially fallible agent who actively learns from their research appear harder to square with both academic expectations and the more confident styles of writing we are accustomed to in teaching materials. Above all else, though, there seems to be a pressing need to identify

forms of writing which can foster constructive empathy between readers and writers rather than simply position writers as authority figures. This for me is the very essence of good teacher research writing: not forcing a conclusion upon readers, but engaging them as peers and challenging their existing assumptions and beliefs.

Teacher research in any of its guises cannot afford to be perceived as a self-serving act. If we share an interest in promoting practitioner inquiry, it must be coupled with greater concern for how those inquiries are shared with other teachers, as well as active examination of how other teachers respond to teacher research writing. While the conclusions I present here are deeply coloured by my own preoccupations, my next task involves taking these articles to practicing teachers and eliciting their responses to published teacher research. The goal of this is to develop a picture of teachers' own expectations of inquiries performed by their peers. There seems good reason to assume that the complexity of teacher beliefs and practices means that these expectations will not conform with those of established research fields, but their exact nature is mostly speculative at present. However, I hope to return soon with a better understanding of how teachers' needs might influence our written inquiries in future.

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## Biodata

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# (Re)searching classroom episodes to stay professionally alert: Exercises in Systematic Informed Reflective Practice

Elena Ončevska Ager

## Introduction

In this article, I report on a three-day workshop that I organised (and took part in) at Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje (Republic of Macedonia), in the period between 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The workshop had the same title as this article and was led by Angi Malderez (UK). The event was jointly sponsored by Ss Cyril and Methodius University and Ars Lamina, and was supported by IATEFL's Research SIG.

The aim of the workshop was to support EFL teachers to engage in sustainable, effective, time-efficient, collaborative and informed investigations into their teaching practices – a kind of (re)search into where they stand currently with regard to their professional development and where they see themselves in the future. We hoped that the workshop would help teachers sustain and develop their motivation for teaching, in a context which recently saw a number of educational reforms happening in a top-down fashion and threatening their motivation (Wyatt and Ončevska Ager, 2017).

A total of 45 EFL teachers from primary, secondary, tertiary (state and private) contexts, as well as student EFL teachers, took part in the workshop. We felt that a varied combination of contexts and experience would make for a rich learning experience for all.



## Systematic Informed Reflective Practice

The main aim of the workshop was to provide exposure to and practice in Systematic Informed Reflective Practice (SIRP). SIRP invites teachers to (1) carefully review a critical classroom episode by describing it in detail, (2) speculate about possible explanations for the episode, (3) review the relevant literature and any other context-relevant information (e.g. about the student(s), the class, the school), (4) decide on the most likely explanation and (5) reflect on its implications for their future teaching and noticing (Malderez, 2015). This five-step model was developed for mentoring purposes and we hoped to encourage on-going peer mentoring (or better still: professional development partnerships, to use Angi's terminology) on and beyond the workshop. Apart from using SIRP for individual and peer development, teachers could also draw on its principles to support others in their professional communities (e.g. students, parents). The five-step SIRP model is briefly described in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of the five steps of the Systematic Informed Reflective Practice (SIRP) mentoring model.

<p><b>Step 1: What stood out for you in the lesson?</b> Describe any problematic, successful or puzzling moment(s) in the lesson.</p>
<p><b>Step 2: How can you understand this?</b> List as many possible explanations as you can for the 'problem', 'success' or 'puzzle' you described above.</p>
<p><b>Step 3: What have others said/written on the topic?</b> Think of any 'theories' suggested in books, articles, talks, conversations with trusted others, etc. What do you know about the context (e.g. student(s), class) in question?</p>
<p><b>Step 4: What is the most likely explanation?</b> Using your Steps 2 and 3 reflections, decide on what may be the most likely explanation or interpretation of the 'problem', 'success' or 'puzzle'.</p>
<p><b>Step 5: Now what?</b> Assuming your Step 4 explanation is correct, think about what it means for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your future teaching</li> <li>Your learners and/or their learning</li> <li>Your future learning as a teacher</li> <li>Any other aspect(s) of your professional/personal life.</li> </ol>

The way the five steps are phrased suggests centrality of the practising teacher's role, with the role of the professional development partner (here abbreviated as PDP, Angi's preferred term for 'critical friend') being to listen carefully and contribute if/when invited. Angi believes that for any valuable learning to take place, the

teacher needs to notice for themselves; others cannot do the noticing for them. That is, they can, but if the teacher is not ready to work with the noticing they are being told about, such telling will prompt little (if any) valuable learning. In other words, one cannot 're-view' one's practice if one has not 'viewed', i.e. noticed, the first time (Mason, 2002). The main role of the PDP, therefore, would be to help the teacher notice for themselves, on the basis of the data shared in Step 1.

## Bypassing judgement to support learnacy development

The support from the PDP can help develop the teacher's learnacy, i.e. their ability and readiness to take charge of their on-going professional learning (Claxton, 2004). Learnacy as a concept is not too dissimilar to teacher autonomy, though it can be argued that it hints more at a skill (such as literacy, numeracy), than a state (as 'autonomy' does). Developing learnacy, according to Angi, relies on making one's own informed judgements. Depending on others' judgements (including criticism and even praise!) threatens to undermine teachers' agency. Angi's reflections on the role of judgements in the learning process led her to co-coin the term 'judgementoring' to mean:

"a one to one relationship between a relatively inexperienced teacher (the mentee) and a relatively experienced one (the mentor) in which the latter, in revealing too readily and/or too often her/his own judgements on or evaluations of the mentee's planning and teaching (e.g. through "comments", "feedback", advice, praise, or criticism), compromises the mentoring relationship and its potential benefits" (Hobson and Malderez, 2013: 90).

This strongly resonated with me because I have on multiple occasions witnessed professional relationships suffering and/or limited learning taking place due to a reliance on the 'positive-negative-positive sandwich' approach to responding to classroom observations. This appears to be a well-established approach in many professional training contexts, including in teacher training. The problematic effectiveness of this approach may be due to it often being based on idiosyncratic judgements (e.g. what is 'positive' for one may be 'negative' for another). There is also the issue of status, with the 'teller' having unilateral control (Argyris, 1976) over the conversation, hence over someone else's learning – not an ideal context for autonomous development to take place, because the natural reaction to such control is typically defensiveness, rather than openness to learning.

Angi also problematised the use of 'feedback', by which she means 'response' to an activity or a behaviour. Understood as such, the only legitimate providers of feedback on the act of teaching can be the learners and not outside observers. Indeed, Angi believes that Step 1

could be made more meaningful, authentic and ultimately useful when the PDP has not, in fact, observed the lesson being discussed. This puts the PDP in a position to need to genuinely inquire about the facts in order to get the 'big picture'. The insistence on a detailed factual description, not evaluation or interpretation (Malderez, 2003), of what went on in the lesson helps put judgment at bay, thus creating conditions for possible interpretations to be speculated about, tested against the literature and other contextual knowledge, and formulated into informed decisions in the steps that follow.

### **We are what we notice**

Before we tried out the SIRP model in the safe environment of small groups of three (within which we adopted the roles of teacher, PDP and listener, respectively), Angi involved us in a number of hands-on tasks which demonstrated the subjective nature of noticing and the human tendency to make sense of facts, rather than to impartially collect/record facts. This rang bells of reflexivity, i.e. the inevitability of interacting with what we are (re)searching, to the point of changing the very construct being (re)searched (Holliday, 2002). What we notice is bound to be shaped by our backgrounds and experiences, and is, therefore, a good starting point (a 'hook') for new learning. We also personally experienced how difficult it can be to distinguish between descriptions and interpretations or evaluations at Step 1, especially when having to grapple with the speed of cognitive processing typical of speaking (as opposed to, for instance, writing). This prepared us to be more forgiving of ourselves and others when it came to our exercises in SIRP in our groups. We also constantly kept in the foreground the idiosyncratic nature of each other's noticing, which can be a useful strategy for getting to know one another better and for developing trust: we are what we notice.

### **Knowledge About and/vs. Knowledge How**

Having read extensively about SIRP prior to the workshop to develop my Knowledge About (declarative teacher knowledge), I was not exactly ready for the startling amount of new learning which came from actually *using* the model with others, developing thus my Knowledge How (procedural teacher knowledge) (Malderez and Wedell, 2007). In the process, I was able to notice first-hand that Knowing About and Knowing How do not necessarily regularly talk to one another, which highlighted for me the importance of experience, which Angi often attempted to 'notice' for us. In fact, my SIRP Knowing How turned out to be quite different compared to the Knowing About, with which I entered the workshop.

The experiential benefits of SIRP for my own learning (about my teaching and about myself as a person!) compel me to use SIRP in my own teacher training context as well as in the safe environment of the group

Angi so skilfully helped build over only three days. Group dynamics, which seemed to inform how Angi led the workshop, is the second major aspect of the event which I feel needs highlighting and I briefly turn to it next.

### **The group**

Talking to the teachers who took part in the workshop, I could notice that many were surprised by the amount of time Angi invested in supporting us to build a closely-knit group. This meant allotting sufficient time for the five stages in a group's life: forming, storming, norming, performing and disbanding (Tuckman, 1965).

Virtually the whole of Day 1 of the workshop was dedicated to forming the group, involving developing positive inter-member relationships, establishing ways of working and formulating shared goals. Day 1 also saw a good deal of norming and some storming, e.g. with individuals questioning the usefulness of the event for them personally and/or the supportiveness of individuals in the group. To address the group's storming, Angi made a habit of collecting our anonymous end-of-day 'reactions' (i.e. reflections on what we had experienced), which we discussed at the start of each next day. Angi carefully addressed the comments that suggested storming by inviting discussion about them and showing in her planning exactly how she proposed that she herself and/or the group could help the individuals who appeared to struggle, motivationally or otherwise. Also, the way Angi approached the group's storming was a good illustration of the importance of creating "non-evaluative spaces" (S. Mann, personal communication, 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2017), a challenge that we, supporters of learning, need to rise to on a regular basis, especially when engaging in SIRP. Angi's visible care for the group's wellbeing may well have led to Day 2 and the first half of Day 3 being mostly focused on performing. The second half of Day 3 was devoted to disbanding the group. This was done by revisiting the group's shared goals to review the group's learning, putting in place on-going support and reviewing each other's experiences, including saying our good-byes.

### **Ways forward**

The end of the workshop saw a group which appeared to be much better bonded than before and ready to 'perform' beyond the workshop. We agreed to meet up regularly over the academic year 2017/18 on a virtual platform to discuss our teaching by using the five steps of the SIRP model and see where such professional development partnerships take us. If any readers are interested in learning more about our work, I would be very happy to give them access to our online experiments in SIRP.

### **In sum...**

The workshop offered opportunities for the teachers to develop noticing skills, and then, based on descriptive accounts of critical classroom episodes, systematically

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



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## Biodata

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# A report on 'Teachers Research! Istanbul 2017'

## Chris Banister



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

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

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

Gary Barkhuizen's opening plenary



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

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

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

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

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

Claudia Bustos Moraga and Richard Smith talking about EAR



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Delegates enjoying a post-conference boat cruise



## Biodata

Chris Banister teaches academic and business English at Regent's University London. He holds an MA in TESOL from UCL Institute of Education and his current research interests include: supporting learner-researchers, EAP vocabulary lists and obtaining learner feedback and evaluations. He is a committee member for the annual Istanbul *Teachers Research!* Conference.

# My impressions of the Teachers Research Conference - Istanbul 2017

**Claudia Bustos-Moraga**

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

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

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

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

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

### Biodata

Claudia has taught at school level from K-12 and in INSETT programmes in underprivileged contexts. She has been a mentor in the British Council / Chilean Ministry of Education Champion Teachers Action Research project since 2014. She holds an MA TESOL in Teacher Education from the University of Leeds. Email: [claudia.bustos.moraga@gmail.com](mailto:claudia.bustos.moraga@gmail.com)

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

### Cemile Buğra

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



## Biodata

Cemile Buğra is a lecturer at Çukurova University. She has been teaching prep classes for 6 years. She holds a BA and MA degree in ELT. Her main interests are personal and professional development. She is also interested in literature, poetry, creative writing and doing academic research. Email: [cmlbgr@hotmail.com](mailto:cmlbgr@hotmail.com)

# On Action Research: Poetic Impressions

## Cemile Buğra

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

### Action! Come on! Go on!

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

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

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

### Awaken and Rise up!

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

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

# The Forum on Language Learning Motivation (FOLLM): The First Steps

Sal Consoli & Takumi Aoyama

## Introduction

Motivation is a crucial construct within the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and the importance of this concept is reflected in a very large body of published research since the pioneering work by Gardner and Lambert (1959). In recent years, a number of events have gathered like-minded researchers and practitioners with an interest in L2 motivation (e.g. the first ever conference on language learning motivation *International Conference on Motivational Dynamics and Second Language Acquisition* held in Nottingham in 2014, and the conference *Psychology of Language Learning* (known as PLL) held in Austria in 2014 and in Finland in 2016. In light of the prolific L2 research community and such successful academic events, the *Forum on Language Learning Motivation* (FOLLM) was conceived in 2016 as a research hub which provides researchers and practitioners with an active platform to share views about state-of-the-art research on language learning motivation (see Aoyama & Consoli, 2017). In this report, we, co-founders of FOLLM, present the initial steps of this dynamic forum in its first year.

## FOLLM 1<sup>st</sup> event: Inaugural lecture (21<sup>st</sup> March 2017)

This inaugural event took place at the University of Warwick. The invited speaker, Dr Martin Lamb (University of Leeds) delivered a talk based on his recent publication: *'When Motivation Research Motivates: Issues in Longitudinal Investigations'* (Lamb, 2016). The talk began with Lamb sharing his sense of startlement after realising that, ten years later, the original participants in his PhD research openly admitted to being influenced by their interactions with him as a researcher of motivation in English language learning. Lamb discussed the notion of 'researcher effects' and identified two types: *immediate researcher effects* in connection with the co-construction and interpretation of data, and *long-term researcher effects* in relation to the influence the research may have on the participants. In his follow-up studies, Lamb identified a number of research effects which assigned the researcher various roles such as *source of inspiration*, *confidant* and *burden*.

After Lamb's talk, the delegates were invited to join an open discussion about how to conduct longitudinal research and to think of their role as participants in such research. One of the key ideas proposed was that it would be important to minimise the element of compulsion when recruiting participants for follow-up studies. One suggestion for researchers to diminish such sense of compulsion was to organise a social gathering which is not meant to be part of the research project (e.g., a coffee with those who participated in the data-collection phase) before asking about actual follow-up research. Another topic that the delegates raised and discussed with the speaker was cultural effects. Through Lamb's talk and the follow-up discussion, we understood Lamb's recent publication (Lamb, 2016) more deeply, and we strongly felt that, as event organisers, creating a space to discuss research papers with fellow researchers and the author gives everybody opportunities to engage critically with studies conducted in our field.

## FOLLM 2<sup>nd</sup> event: One-day workshop: *Researching L2 motivation — three experienced voices* (22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017)

FOLLM's second event took place at the University of Warwick. We had the pleasure to be in the presence of Prof. Zoltán Dörnyei (University of Nottingham), Dr Maggie Kubanyiova (University of Birmingham) and Dr Ema Ushioda (University of Warwick). Their talk slides are available online (<https://follmresearch.wordpress.com/past-events/>). Dörnyei's talk revolved around the concept of *Good Research* with emphasis on the driving forces behind research design and data-collection instruments: *good ideas*. When defining *Good Research*, Dörnyei argued that people normally think of reliability and validity. However, he argued that while studies often meet such criteria, this research often lacks the ability to grip the reader into something genuinely interesting. When defining *Good Ideas*, Dörnyei equated these to an observation (i.e., something you notice which is curious), something which may have implications that go beyond applied linguistics, or something personal (i.e., something one wishes to explore for its own sake). Dörnyei addressed the importance of *research design* and framed this discussion around the principle of creativity whilst offering insightful advice for both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Amongst the tips for those wishing to design a questionnaire for research purposes were: (a) *A focus on unique samples* (i.e., it may be worth having a smaller sample but with a specific feature or idea which may target a unique population), and (b) *Multiple administration* (i.e., if one wishes to work within a longitudinal framework, then a recommendation is to add a retrospective element to it). Dörnyei offered advice to those working within a qualitative paradigm, and such thoughts included (c) *Doing multiple interviews* (i.e., the

first interview is an opportunity to break the ice with a participant, the second interview allows to zoom in and round up some issues and the final interview is for fine-tuning), and (d) *Embracing an emergent design* (i.e., the qualitative researcher needs to be ready to 'go with the flow' of their research project and cater for unexpected and emerging themes or eventualities). The talk was concluded with a critical discussion about the use of mixed-methods research designs and the compelling message that a mixed method study is not necessarily better than a good qualitative or quantitative study.

Kubanyiova began her talk by saying that there is more than just data in our research work, and that there are people behind the data and final findings. She argued that qualitative researchers need to be able to see *beyond themes* and highlighted the researcher's responsibility to immerse themselves in the data and critically engage with the ability to 'see' such data and scrutinise what is going on under the surface. Kubanyiova shared an extract from a transcript about the interactions of a teacher with her students. The aim of this specific classroom event was for the teacher to give her students opportunities for discussion. However, looking at this transcript, it became clear that instead of giving the students space to express their ideas, the teacher was doing something unexpected in this classroom – i.e. only one student was engaged. Kubanyiova reported that her understanding of this experience was different from the teacher's and thus identified some tension between these two different types of understanding. Kubanyiova used this example to illustrate that if one solely relied upon a thematic analysis then the theme would have been *The Teacher wants the students to express their ideas and then what she says is different from what she actually did*. Kubanyiova, however, recognised the complexity of language learning and human behaviour, and *went beyond the theme* to understand why people do what they do. Therefore, after some intensive interpreting of the data and critical engagement with the teacher participant and the research site, Kubanyiova began to identify signs of *vision* and to see evidence of *possible selves* in the data. She could have asked the teacher to talk about her *possible future self* but, instead, asked the teacher about other aspects of her life thereby giving the participant the freedom of choosing what was meaningful to her. Kubanyiova advised researchers to remember that participants need to talk about what matters to them. The concluding remarks were that qualitative researchers must spend time with the data and understand it deeply in order to 'be able to paint it big'.

Finally, Ema Ushioda gave an inspiring talk based upon her publication '*Language learning motivation through a small lens: A research agenda*' (Ushioda, 2016), in which she broached three challenges of L2 motivation research: (a) *Limitations of L2 motivation research in SLA*, (b) *Popularity of motivation as MA dissertation*

*topic*, and (c) *Shortage of classroom-based practitioner research*. Ushioda addressed the first problem by highlighting that the study of L2 motivation lies outside of SLA work (Ellis, 2008) in that motivation remains isolated from the core linguistic tradition of SLA. One reason to explain this may be that L2 motivation is normally investigated in relation to another variable at a generic scale such as achievement rather than in connection to specific aspects and core SLA concerns. In order to problematise the fact that motivation is a popular MA dissertation topic, Ushioda argued that often these dissertations tend to be bland and mainly lack deep engagement with a specific research topic. Regarding the shortage of L2 motivation classroom-based and practitioner research, she argued that most L2 motivation research tends to be conducted by external researchers who 'fly in the classroom, collect the data and fly back out'. In other words, she argued that very few L2 motivation studies are grounded in specific contexts of practice and even less research has been conducted by teachers directly in the spirit of teacher-research. She argued that possible reasons for such lack of L2 motivation teacher-research were that teachers may feel that self-reported data of their own students may not yield reliable data and may worry that these processes of data collection could influence or 'contaminate' such data. Ushioda suggested (a) addressing these issues by integrating (rather than separating) teaching and researching objectives (Ushioda, 2013) and (b) developing motivation 'research' tools that function also (or primarily) as 'pedagogical' tools to enhance students' voice and involvement in learning. Ushioda concluded that L2 motivation research would benefit from a richer and sharper focus on the local and particular, rather than the general; and that these locally situated understandings of motivation can have wider resonance and contribute to informing theory and practice more broadly.

### **FOLLM 3<sup>rd</sup> event: Work in progress (10<sup>th</sup> November 2017)**

This third event took place at the University of Nottingham with the financial support of the host School of English. The event aimed to provide early-career researchers with opportunities to present their ongoing projects and obtain feedback from expert academics. The early career-researchers, Jo Leech (Anglia Ruskin University) and Taguhi Sahakyan (University of Leeds), presented their work-in-progress. Dr Christine Muir (University of Nottingham) and Dr Martin Edwardes (Kings College London) provided insightful feedback as discussants and generated rich and active discussions. Over 30 delegates from different UK institutions and course levels participated in this event.

Jo Leech's talk was entitled '*The reflective L2 visionary*' and was based on her MA dissertation. The main focus of her MA research was the vision among in-training teachers, and she elaborated on the notions of imagery

and ideal teacher self. Also, she mentioned that her research project was inspired by the 2<sup>nd</sup> FOLLM one-day event. Dr Christine Muir's presentation '*Investigating English language learner role models: Initial results from a large scale survey*' drew upon her latest work-in-progress project investigating language learners' role models, which is the result of a collaboration with Cambridge University Press. Dr Martin Edwardes (Kings College London) discussed '*Self-motivation: Who is motivating whom?*' by referring to the multifacetedness of self, and, finally, Taguhi Sahakyan, in her talk '*From the ideal to the feasible self: "I can't pretend to know everything"*', discussed the notion of self from a different perspective: language teachers' layered self-framework from the viewpoint of person-in-context perspectives.

### Conclusion

In light of these three highly successful, well-attended and insightful events, we are pleased to acknowledge the presence of an ever-growing international Forum On Language Learning Motivation community. We thus look forward to fostering research connections and co-constructing even more powerful research ideas in language learning motivation in the future.

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### Biodata

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Takumi Aoyama is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick. His research interests cover language learning motivation in the Japanese context, complex and dynamic systems approach to the psychology of language learning, and second language research methods. He received his MA in ELT degree from the University of Warwick in 2016.

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## Teacher Association Research for Professional Development in Cameroon

Eric Enongene Ekembe and Azarh Sheila Fonjong

### Introduction

Professional development in the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry through teacher associations has gained currency within this decade and there have been calls for research on how this goes on. Such calls are premised on the belief that evidence of collective generation and dissemination of good practice can empower less active members of TAs thereby redynamising ELT within and across a range of contexts. Like other teacher associations, CAMELTA has been involved in activities that support English teacher development in Cameroon through annual conferences and regional workshops. This has been going on amidst both economic and technical constraints that can be traced to the broader political and educational contexts. Such broader contextual factors have had a significantly negative impact on teacher motivation leading, in some cases, to stiff resistance from practicing teachers who do not see an immediate interest in such Continuing Professional Development (CPD) endeavours. In 2013, CAMELTA set out on a new journey that would enable the association to develop a bank of research questions as well as collect accounts of successful classroom practice which could be more widely shared amongst members of the association (for details, see Smith & Kuchah, 2014; 2016). Following this, and owing to the challenges of engaging its over 2000 members nationwide who, although interested in the project, were not sufficiently prepared for research in language

education, a smaller group, the CAMELTA Research Group was formed in September 2016. This paper presents a short account of the activities of this group over its first year (2016-2017) and reflects on the challenges and successes recorded so far.

### Setting up the CAMELTA Research Group

Following the initiation of the CAMELTA research project in 2013 and thanks to seed funding (GBP200) from IATEFL Research SIG, research questions and responses to an initial open-ended questionnaire (see Smith & Kuchah 2016) were collated, categorized and uploaded to the CAMELTA website (<http://camelta-cameroon.weebly.com/resources--useful-links.html>). The expectation was that CAMELTA members interested in classroom based research would make use of this database as a starting point for their enquiries, but between 2013 and 2016, only one publication (Ekembe 2016) had drawn from the online data. Informal conversations with members at local and national events revealed that there was a general docility amongst teachers who thought they had nothing to contribute to both the local and global ELT industry. In an attempt to respond to such understanding, the CAMELTA Research Group was created with the view of demonstrating that some of the current practices of its members were good enough to generate pedagogic reflections that are consumable both locally and globally. The vision behind such agenda was to develop a group of teachers who will be able to articulate their practice clearly and to develop a bank of pedagogic principles that are appropriate to the Cameroonian context and consistent with current thinking in ELT. Specifically, the Group aimed at:

- encouraging teachers to reflect on and interrogate their practices;
- coordinating teacher research based on autonomous and collaborative inquiry;
- testing new grounds in the classroom and reporting them to peers in monthly meetings;
- cultivating the spirit of Action Research and enhancing professional development within the framework of CPD

These goals were driven by the conviction to enable Cameroonian teachers to develop from their identities as 'ordinary teachers' (as they often refer to themselves) to those of informed practitioners and producers of knowledge about teaching that can be shared with other professionals throughout the world. For this to be effective, members had to volunteer to join the group and to commit to working together to achieve these aims. In total, 34 teachers agreed to join the group and were subscribed to a group WhatsApp forum.

### Setting the ball rolling

The first task was for each member to visit the CAMELTA website and identify three research questions (RQ) which resonated with what they would want to investigate in their classrooms; they were also encouraged to include any important RQ not found in the online list. Over a period of one week, members each shared their top three research questions on the WhatsApp group, together with a short explanation/justification of their choice of RQs as in the excerpts in the table below:

Research Question	Arguments	Thematic concern
<p><b>1a.</b>What can Teachers of English do to sustain learners' interest in large classes during lessons?</p> <p><b>1b.</b> What must teachers do to motivate students who are not interested in the subject to become interested?</p>	<p><i>I chose this question because interest is central to participation and learning. Once the learner loses interest, all what you prepared, no matter how excellent it were, would have been a waste.</i></p> <p><i>I chose this question because every day I am faced with this challenge of my students complaining that English is too difficult; as such they are always distracted during the lesson. I try in my own little way to bring them closer to the subject. Thus doing research on this will help me to better overcome this challenge in my lessons</i></p>	Motivation
<p><b>2a.</b>What are the problems that the English language teachers of "Anglais" (i.e English language to francophones) face in their classrooms? How can these problems be solved?</p> <p><b>2b.</b>How can you make students interact actively in English during English language lessons?</p>	<p><i>I selected this question because I am faced with challenging situations time and again in my Anglais classes. I actually get stocked at times during lessons because my students do not seem to understand all the English I speak. I would wish to work and share experiences with others in identifying the causes and finding out what could be done to make lessons more successful in our Anglais classrooms.</i></p> <p><i>I think it is important to me because I teach purely francophone students who neither understand nor speak English language and I find it difficult to get them participate in class.</i></p>	Low learners' proficiency

<p><b>3a.</b> What strategies can teachers use to train learners to write various text genres (essay types) for classroom use?</p> <p><b>3b.</b> How can we effectively teach the literacy skills to empower learners to read and write confidently?</p>	<p><i>In my opinion, the relevance of the problem of teaching writing lies in the fact that, nowadays speaking skills are far more emphasized in the classroom than writing skills. This leads to the training of Cameroonians whose sociolinguistic competence is pending. In order to get learners totally participate in the construction of new knowledge and competence there is a need to really train our learners produce various text types that can be used not only in the classroom but prepare them for future challenges in production and dissemination of research findings. As far as I train my learners in achieving great writing skills, I usually plan and teach writing in a systematic way in large classrooms and it always works.</i></p> <p><i>I have lots of difficulties teaching reading and writing with very little resources especially in EFL contexts. One of the reasons why we go to school is to be able to read and write. Literacy skills are also very important in the learners' educational career.</i></p>	<p>Teaching English language skills (reading and writing)</p>
<p><b>4a.</b> What strategies can a teacher use in classes with no text book.</p> <p><b>4b.</b> How do English language teachers remediate in a situation where the ratio of the lack of text books is 10:1?</p> <p><b>4c.</b> How can Teachers cope with the lack of textbooks on the part of the learners?</p>	<p><i>1. The greatest problem in our schools today is the fact that parents think education and sponsoring of the child ends at the level of their fees. This has created a great barrier for teachers to get into real interaction with their learners. My focus shall be on how teachers can use other means to resolve such problems.</i></p> <p><i>2. I selected this question because I am faced with a lot of difficulties working with my learners in a class with one or no text book at all. This issue slows down my work. I believe Carrying out research will help to acquire strategies to cope with the situation and still teach effectively.</i></p> <p><i>3. This is a perennial problem in most of the schools and I intend to share some of the strategies that I've learned and adopted in such circumstances.</i></p>	<p>Lack of course books</p>

The RQs were ranked according to frequency and classified into four thematic areas: including learner motivation, low learner proficiency, Teaching English language skills (reading and writing) and lack of course books. Participants then agreed to focus on ways of investigating and developing learner motivation since this appeared to be the most pressing thematic concern. In a second online (WhatsApp) meeting participants identified and discussed a number of strategies that could be introduced in the classroom to foster learner motivation, and these were summarized and shared on the chat forum for every member to review. Following this, members were encouraged to pick realistic strategies, plan and deliver lessons, and then report their classroom experiences in face-to-face meetings. As a way of creating opportunities for non-controlled engagement, they opted to carry out the exercise according to their individual schedules. Thanks to funding from the University of Bath, five different face-to-face meetings were held during which time participants narrated detailed stories of how they planned, delivered, and evaluated motivation-based lessons. Each participant account was followed by a question-and-

answer session and discussions in which participants reflected on the content, process, and thinking behind the lessons etc., highlighting what they considered the particular merits of the teaching and learning process. Two further workshops were dedicated to reading and discussion of published articles on the subject, such as, Kuchah and Smith's (2011) article on learner motivation and learner autonomy and Xiao's (2013) article on planning motivation lessons. These were complemented with an Action Research workshop sponsored by the US Embassy in Cameroon and delivered by Peggy Kang, a US language fellow to Cameroon.

### And so What?

So far, feedback from group members has been very positive, as can be seen from the following excerpts from the WhatsApp forum:

#### Excerpt 1

*... the activities we have had so far have given me more aptitudes to analyse classroom practices and coach younger colleagues in my department.*

### Excerpt 2

*I have learned a lot through this group. First of all, I have learned that as a teacher, I need to be reflective in order to improve on my classroom practices. Secondly, I have learned that through Action Research, I can become a better teacher. I have also learned to share my shortcomings as a teacher and have learned from other colleagues. I have become more confident in preparing and delivering my lessons, moving from teacher centered lessons to learner-centered lessons. I have also become conscious that I could document my lessons. Above all, I have become a better teacher and still strive to continue to grow personally. CAMELTA Research Group is a place to belong.*

### Excerpt 3

*The CAMELTA Research Group has opened up my mind to understand that to succeed in ELT practices, I need to document the most winning and challenging experiences and that will give birth to research. Through this Group, I have been ...exposed to the good news that what we are doing as professionals here is to some extent better when compared to some practices worldwide. I have learnt to be committed, to write and to mirror my classroom activities. Through the presentations we have been having in the group, I have got to ... to revisit the need for my learners to provide material for their learning especially in the teaching of writing. In addition, this group has enabled me to be more sensitive to what makes my lessons work... the group has helped me a lot to understand some deep things concerning research such as the importance of timing ... setting action plans and assuming my assigned tasks. As a member of this group, I have been able to take engagement to try to do better in my pedagogic activities now, than I used to do before. I have learnt through this group that the more experiences are shared, the more I feel confident in teaching in general. I have also learnt that for research to be successful, very committed mentors like the ones we have both at home and abroad should also blow the flames of encouragements as they have always done. I have been exposed to the fact that carrying out research as a team is less frustrating than carrying it as an individual. The list is long but above all, one of the most amazing benefits to me is that through this group, I am growing professionally and I feel like I am able to improve on ELT by empowering other close colleagues.*

Concretely, over the course of this first year, group members have been able to develop in different ways. For example, four group members (including the second author of this report) were invited to run training workshops and demonstration lessons for pre-service teachers at the College of Education of the University of Yaounde 1. This collaboration between the College and in-service teachers is an unprecedented development in ELT in Cameroon. Three other members of the group have recollected their experiences in newsletter papers that are undergoing editing in international ELT

newsletters while three other novice teachers in the school of education (Higher Teachers Training College, ENS, Yaounde) are now set to make their first presentations at the National CAMELTA conference.

The feedback provided by members has character of feelings and subject matter and the spontaneity with which members responded was in itself an indication of how much they have found membership of the group useful to their professional and emotional development. Since, upward mobility and career profiling is not the result of professional input, pulling teachers to be involved in such reflective practices requires more than just gaining insights into the profession. For participants to leave their work place and get to Yaounde for workshops for more than four hours and go back with no support is not yet a culture of Cameroonians, who are barely struggling to survive in a context having an inflation rate of more than three percent. For a new Group such as this one to depart from their traditional culture and get involved in such activities with such feedback is a great starting point with potential for bigger initiatives if technical and material support is continuous.

### What next?

Based on the experience accumulated, the Group has developed an agenda to further develop classroom research on motivation as a collaborative responsibility. Instead of simply preparing motivation-based lessons, members have developed an observation mobility scheme whereby they travel to other schools to observe peers; exchange knowledge on lesson procedures, successes and limitations; get feedback from learners; plan and deliver lessons in peers' classrooms in view of systematically developing learner motivation profiles. The interest here is to be able to analyse their professional knowledge and practice based on the evidence obtained from learners, how responsive their research agenda has been and how much professional consciousness has been the output of the agenda. In fact, more recently, TESOL International Association organized a summit on the future of the TESOL profession which, amongst other themes, considered how TESOL professionals, particularly working within TAs, could become change agents. Within this thematic concern, a key question was how practice can shape and inform policy and research. It is our strong conviction that evidence from our present agenda will provide some response to this worry.

### Conclusion

In a context fraught with a broken link between career profile and industry, it seems very challenging getting professionals to settle and carry on with something that has incidence only on professional satisfaction. Professional development within the CAMELTA Research Group, evident from membership testimonies is a breakthrough amidst constraints given its infancy. The response to the frequency of meetings (both online

and onsite) seems to have been the result of the benefits of the meetings as opposed to instrumental motivation, which naturally characterizes reaction to professional activities in Cameroon.

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## Biodata

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Azarah Sheila Fonjong teaches English as a Foreign and Second Language in Cameroon. She is an active member of the CAMELTA Research Group and has recently been involved in classroom based research as well as in assisting younger colleagues and trainee teachers develop their career aspirations.

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# The International Festival of Teacher-research in ELT

**Richard Smith, interviewed by Deborah Bullock**

From April 2017 to March 2018, [The International Festival of Teacher-Research in ELT](#) featured a range of face-to-face and online events promoting and showcasing teacher-research by teachers of English around the world.



The festival aimed to promote teacher-research (research initiated and carried out by teachers into issues of importance to them in their own work) as an empowering means of professional development.

A key objective of the festival was to help more individual teachers engage in teacher-research. The festival also sought to encourage Teacher Associations (TAs) to support teacher-research by showcasing existing models of mentoring schemes.

Twelve separate events took place in 2017, and one of the last events of the Festival was the IATEFL Research SIG supported January–February 2018 Electronic Village Online experience, 'Classroom-based research for professional development', which offered voluntary online mentoring to participants from all over the world. You can find more information, including photos and videos from each event on [The International Festival of Teacher-Research in ELT](#) website.

In this interview, Richard Smith, the instigator of the Festival and Chair of its Steering Committee, explains further what the Festival has been for, what it has achieved, and what he hopes its legacy might be.

**First of all, Richard, what exactly was the 'International Festival of Teacher-research in ELT'? And why call it a 'festival'?**

Well, at the beginning of 2017 I realized there were going to be a lot of teacher-research events going on during the year in different parts of the world and the idea came to me that it'd be good to try to bring them all under one umbrella, to promote teacher-research in a very practical way and link people up internationally with one another. It was great that various groups also saw the value of this and quickly agreed to come together to support and publicise the initiative – IATEFL Research SIG especially, but also TESOL, the British Council, IATEFL Teacher Development SIG, and various teacher associations.<sup>1</sup> I tried to ensure that all the events that

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<sup>1</sup> Here is the full list of supporters: [IATEFL Research SIG](#), [IATEFL Teacher Development SIG](#), [All-India Network of English Teachers \(AINET\)](#), [Federación Argentina de Asociaciones de Profesores de Inglés \(FAAPI\)](#), [TESOL International Association](#), [CAMELTA](#), [APIBA](#), and [British Council English Agenda](#), [British Council TeachingEnglish](#) and [TIRE](#) also highlighted the festival in blog posts.

happened – in Glasgow, Argentina, Istanbul, India and Adelaide as well as internationally online – were at least partially video-recorded and that video and reports were put on the Festival website, so that as many people as possible could benefit. So, the Festival was basically a series of events in different places with recordings made and as much publicity attached as possible so that more teachers and teacher educators worldwide would get to hear about teacher-research and see its value, not just in the abstract but via concrete examples in different settings.

I thought calling it a 'festival' would convey well the sense of a kind of celebration – of teachers taking matters into their own hands, of teacher-research being seen to be actually happening around the world. And being seen as something colourful, not dry, drab, scary or academic!

### And what prompted you to focus on and promote teacher-research, and initiate this 'festival'?

Well, ever since I became coordinator of the Research SIG in 2011 – and this carried on after I stepped down in 2015 – I saw promoting teacher-research as something particularly valuable that the SIG could do – partly this was because I'd found it to be valuable in my own development as a teacher, partly because it's consistent with the notion of pursuing 'appropriate' methodology in a relatively bottom-up manner, since, after all, teachers are the foremost experts on their own classrooms.

As coordinator, then, I felt that the Research SIG should not just be promoting engagement with existing research but should also be encouraging teachers to get engaged *in* research, demystifying research and, in a way, democratizing it. So I got involved in organising events such as workshops, with Anne Burns, Dick Allwright, and so on, and then the all-day event *Teachers Research!* at IATEFL in 2011 as a kind of culmination of this (in the sense that it provided a place for people who'd been inspired by the workshops to present on their research). That event turned out to be just another beginning, though, and it inspired the concept of a full-scale conference in Istanbul, which has been going on annually for a number of years now – and a parallel conference with the same name in Latin America (held in Santiago in 2016 and Buenos Aires in 2017). Then, after 2013 I became involved in advising on some teacher-research mentoring projects for the British Council – in Chile and India and, relatively recently, in Peru and Nepal.

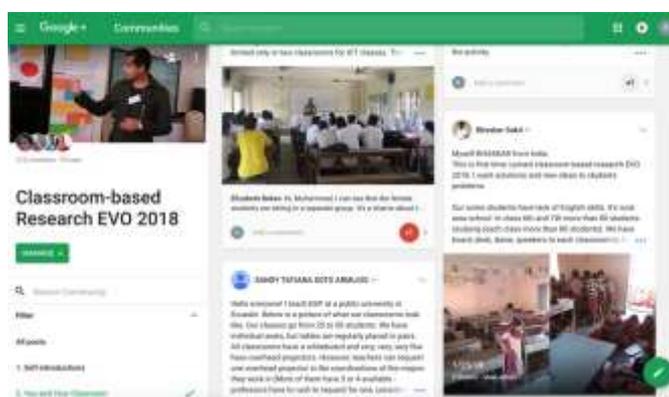
In 2017–2018 I also led the TESOL Electronic Village Online on 'Classroom-based research for professional development'. So, one thing led to another – 'snowballed', you could say. Actually, I was finding it hard to keep track of all the things going on and that was another reason for initiating the Festival – to maintain a kind of overall understanding (not least in my own brain) of everything that was going on! Bringing all these

events together in some way also seemed to reflect the international spirit of the EVO which had just ended. At the same time, several of the Festival events have a particular focus on ELT in 'difficult circumstances', which was my particular focus during 2017–18, with an ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) project on that.



### Were there any other reasons you wanted to link up these events?

Well, in a way it was already beginning to happen – for example, building on work done the previous year by Kenan Dikilitaş and Aslı Sağlam (both from Turkey), I brought together Paula Rebolledo (Chile) with Amol Padwad (India) as main presenters of the EVO in January 2017, and what characterized that experience was in fact its genuinely international, intercultural atmosphere – we had all these photos of classrooms from around the world...



... and all these teachers interacting with each other and sharing insights across time and space boundaries – it was a pretty amazing feeling to help bring people together like that, in a big professional space. Another aspect is that I deliberately wanted to promote a certain valuing of the expertise of teachers and teacher educators in local contexts internationally (I'm thinking also of Paula's and Amol's wider work here, but also of the way insights developed in the Champion Teachers programme in Chile have been serving as a good basis for work in India and Nepal recently). And, finally, and most importantly perhaps, I wanted to advocate for teacher-research - and a particular view that teacher-research is feasible and useful if presented in the right way. Showing it as a worldwide 'movement' was a good way to do that.

**Can you say a bit more about that particular motivation to portray teacher-research as a movement - where did that come from?**

I've been quite frustrated about academic co-option of teacher-research / academic pronouncements about it, as I've expressed in a few places. But I was also annoyed by some quite prevalent statements that action research is good in theory but nobody engages in it. And I thought that we need more examples of teachers actually engaging in teacher-research – to provide a riposte to the critics and enable more teachers to feel inspired to engage in teacher-research. I think it has started to come across as more like a movement than the rather disparate individual efforts there were before - usually being undertaken in relatively privileged situations - that were apparent till recently. Of course this has been strengthened by the comparatively large-scale projects which have been started up in e.g. Chile, India, and Peru.

Part of it was probably also to gain maximum publicity and impact for certain events and publications I was involved in in the ESRC impact initiative (they were sponsoring it after all) - but I hope people feel we kept a broad and eclectic remit to promote whatever was going on e.g. Exploratory Practice events in Buenos Aires and Rio; Action Research (Australia); general 'teacher-research' conferences, as well as Exploratory Action Research. Overall, we thought the whole would probably be much greater than the sum of the parts.

Also, finally, another idea behind the Festival was that it could provide a basis for some genuinely international publications - we've had the TR! conference and subsequent publications in Istanbul for a number of years, although that mainly attracts Turkish teachers, and now we're beginning to see publications from other parts of the world, such as [Teaching in low-resource classrooms: voices of experience](#) (India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and [Champion Teachers: stories of exploratory action research](#) (Chile). But something more international would be desirable.



**So what kind of festival events have taken place so far, and where?**

Well, the festival started at the IATEFL Conference in Glasgow in April 2017 with a [Symposium on Teacher-](#)

[research for Difficult Circumstances](#). Various teacher-research mentoring projects were reported on in that, including the [AINET](#) Teacher Research Project (Nepal and India), [Champion Teachers](#) project (Chile), and the collaborative teacher association research project within [CAMELTA](#) (Cameroon). Each of these projects demonstrates how teacher-research can be an empowering means of addressing difficult circumstances including large class size, lack of physical resources, and so on. The symposium and several of these projects themselves were the University of Warwick ['Teacher-research for difficult circumstances'](#) impact initiative. Also in April, some of the participants from the TESOL International Association Electronic Village Online (EVO) on ['Classroom-based research for professional development'](#) made [online presentations](#) of teacher-research they had carried out as a result of taking part in the EVO. I think what these presentations clearly demonstrate is how teacher-research really is possible even for teachers in quite difficult and internationally diverse circumstances.

In May, the festival focused on events in Latin America. In Buenos Aires, there was a workshop [Acting for Understanding: Exploratory Practice](#) for student-teachers and members of APIBA (Association of English teachers in Buenos Aires, and this was followed by the second annual Latin American Conference for Teacher-research in ELT - [Teachers Research! Buenos Aires 2017](#). Another workshop - [Exploratory Action Research for professional development](#) - was held in La Plata with teachers, student-teachers and members of staff associated with the Instituto Superior de Formación Docente N° 97 de La Plata (Escuela Normal 3).



Then in June, there was the [Teachers Research!](#) Conference in Istanbul, the third of its kind to be held in Turkey. In July, the festival was back in Latin America, in Rio de Janeiro for a [discussion on](#)

[Exploratory Practice](#) and [symposium on Exploratory Practice](#). Also in July, the IATEFL Research SIG organised and sponsored [an online conversation](#) around new books showcasing and discussing teacher-research.

In September, the festival reached Nagpur, India with the first [AINET International Teacher Research Conference](#). And this was closely followed by a workshop in Assam - [Introduction to Exploratory Action Research in ELT](#).

And the final festival event for September was held in Adelaide, Australia – the 8th [Action Research in ELICOS Colloquium](#).



Actually, the titles of some of these events may sound rather grandiose, but what's important to stress is that they were all designed to encourage, involve, guide and empower teachers, and in some cases even student-teachers, to investigate their own practices and classrooms, and to show that it is possible for any classroom teacher to do that. They were mostly very teacher-friendly events with lots of poster presentations, interaction and colour!

**That's quite an impressive array of events, and certainly international. So, how did you manage to organize them all? What kind of support did you have?**

Well, as I said, the Festival was a kind of 'umbrella' for different events which had their own local organizers. So, for example, organization of the [Teachers Research! Buenos Aires 2017 conference](#) was led by Dario Banegas in Argentina, and this was preceded by a workshop organized by the Buenos Aires English Teachers' Association, APIBA. The conference in September in India was organized by another teacher association, AINET, and the University of Gauhati followed that up with an invitation to deliver a workshop on Exploratory Action Research. Again, that was locally organized, though expenses were supported by IATEFL's Teacher Development SIG, topped up from a research project grant I'd received from the ESRC (UK). That grant also helped me get some clerical assistance

for coordination of the Festival. Then, there was a [steering committee](#) made up of local organizers, sponsors and our Honorary President, David Nunan.

**And, are there any plans for the festival to continue in 2018?**

Well, originally we were thinking that the festival would end around September 2017. However, it took on a bit of a life of its own so some people thought it should go on indefinitely. We eventually decided to pull the plug on it, at least temporarily and end on a high note with the [2018 EVO for 'Classroom-based research for professional development'](#), a [webinar by Emily Edwards](#) and – possibly (though this is not confirmed at the time of writing) an event in India in March and an online discussion.



**Just to go back to your earlier comment about how it is possible for any classroom teacher to investigate their own practice. What would you say to a teacher who has no idea about research?**

To begin with, you could learn more about teacher-research by browsing the Festival web-pages, and perhaps watching some of the teacher poster presentations. It's also valuable to have a more experienced mentor or friend to help you get started and help you along the way, but you could equally well form a self-help support group with like-minded colleagues. We tried to build up a set of resources – including [online introductory material](#) – on our website to help teachers new to teacher-research. And you can learn a lot by reading [reports by teachers](#) themselves. You could join the next [Electronic Village Online \(EVO\) on classroom-based research for professional development](#) and receive some mentoring at a distance and/or you can work your way through the materials from this year's EVO, on the same website.

**And finally, what for you have been the main achievements or successes of the festival?**

The existence of the Festival website which we constructed to share information about events and video-presentations, posters, and so on, means that outputs are now available to a much wider audience, in particular to teachers in developing countries, who may not otherwise have access to professional development opportunities of this kind. This website was frequently

highlighted in the Teachers Research! Facebook group as well as via IATEFL Research SIG, British Council TeachingEnglish and other media. Also, a major aim of our activity was to bring together teacher-researchers around the world and help build a sense of a global ELT teacher-research community, and I think the Festival has contributed considerably to that aim.

What I really hope is that people might remember the Festival in the future, and everything the Research SIG's done over the past five or so years as a turning-point, where teacher-research gained legitimacy as something so-called 'ordinary' teachers can do even in difficult circumstances, in fact a way to begin to address such circumstances in a positive manner!



## Biodata

**Richard Smith** (<http://www.warwick.ac.uk/richardcsmith>) is a Reader in ELT and Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick. He has coordinated ELT research capacity-building projects in the UK and India, and is academic adviser to several teacher-research mentoring schemes in Latin America and South Asia, including the British Council Nepal Aptis Action Research Mentoring Scheme. His recent relevant co-authored or co-edited publications include [Teachers Research!](#) and [Developing Insights into Teacher-research](#) (both, published by IATEFL), and [Champion Teachers: Stories of Exploratory Action Research](#), [Teaching in Low-resource Classrooms: Voices of Experience](#) and [A Handbook for Exploratory Action Research](#) (all three of these for the British Council).

**Deborah Bullock** ([bullockdeborah1@gmail.com](mailto:bullockdeborah1@gmail.com)) is a freelance educational consultant and materials writer, specialising in primary and secondary English language teaching. She is especially interested in learner-centred approaches to assessment, and practitioner research and development. She has co-edited several teacher-research publications including: [Teachers Research!](#) (published by IATEFL) [Champion Teachers: Stories of Exploratory Action Research](#), and [Teaching in Low-resource Classrooms: Voices of Experience](#) (for the British Council).

# Reviews of publications

**Puzzling over Exploratory Practice: a review of Hanks, J. (2017) *Exploratory Practice in Language Teaching: puzzling about principles and practices*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.**

**By Sabine Mendes Lima Moura**

Judith Hanks' *Exploratory Practice in Language Teaching: Puzzling about principles and practices* presents an approachable insider's view on the experiences of Exploratory Practice (EP) practitioners around the world, undertaking the important task of comparing, contrasting, organizing, and classifying the available knowledge on the field. As the author herself explains, EP is a "form of practitioner research in which learners as well as teachers are encouraged to investigate their own learning/teaching practices, while concurrently practicing the target language" (p. 2). In this publication, Hanks, an EP practitioner herself, remains true to EP's vocation of integrating teaching, learning, and research through lived experience.

In doing so, she resorts to a highly dialogic writing style. My view is that the book could be read as a reference guide, a collection of practical resources, and/or an inspirational narrative, with most of its sections arising from investigative questions (cf. puzzles). Readers are invited to adopt a "more eclectic approach to reading" by choosing "where to start, where to pick up, and where to leave-off" (p. 18), according to their different concerns. Hanks' work meets the general objective of including "not only language learners, but also teachers, teacher educators, educational psychologists, and researchers who engage in EP" (p. 8). It offers an analytical compilation of historical background, conceptual framework, reports, case studies, and personal accounts of EP. The book's organization favours pedagogic use, including text boxes that not only highlight concepts, but also include quotes and vignettes deemed to be especially insightful in each of its sections. Definitions within EP are expanded, reworded, and complemented throughout the text, mirroring EP's process of working for the understanding of its puzzles.

The book could also be understood as the collegial manifest for a subversive approach to knowledge construction, since it includes practitioners' voices from various walks of life and cultural backgrounds "on equal footing" (p. 11) with the author's narratives and analyses. Thus, it challenges presupposed authorial hierarchies, echoing Hanks' own history of publications, which

includes a volume dedicated to foregrounding learner's roles as "importantly parallel to the role of the people we already happily see as 'practitioners' – the teachers" (Allwright and Hanks, 2009, p. 2). As an associate professor in Language Education, she describes herself on her university webpage (<http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk/people/academic/hanks/>) as a teacher, a learner, a teacher educator, and a researcher. Reading her essentially collaborative text could benefit language professionals and students, educators in different areas, and scholars who are interested in innovative approaches to research.

Divided into four parts, the book opens with an assessment of the notion of research, discussing domains which are commonly grouped under the practitioner research label, namely Reflective Practice (RP), Action Research (AR), and EP. While addressing some of the area's most polemical issues, it positions EP as a unique contributor to initiatives that foster research done by education practitioners - teachers, students, administrators - regarding their own practices and agendas (part one). It also explores practical applications of EP's notion of *work for understanding*, conceptualized as a means of resisting the insidious discourse of improvement, which tends to prevail in teaching pre-service and in-service educational practices (part two). Furthermore, it offers a guide for readers who are willing to engage in this kind of research (part three) and a "Resources" section (p. 318 - part four), which includes interviews with key practitioners in the field of EP.

Part One, *The Historical and Conceptual Background to Researching Practice*, establishes EP's stance amongst the other members of the practitioner research "family" (pages 28-30). This analogy uncovers the importance of "naming" (p. 25) as one of the processes that may lead us to deeper understanding by assigning RP, AR and EP sibling roles. As Hanks respectfully puzzles about the specific characteristics of each family member, readers concurrently construe their own ways of dealing with the axiomatic notion "that research into classroom language learning and teaching should be participatory, egalitarian, and empowering", even if the achievement of these three aims "has been the subject of much debate" (p.1). In the meantime, EP stands as the sibling who, differently from RP, goes beyond reflection towards action for understanding. Differently from AR, it explicitly includes learners as co-researchers, prioritizes working for understanding over problem-solving, and uses everyday classroom activities as a means of engaging in research (pp. 26-27).

Positioning these forms of practitioner research as family members leads to considerations on how scarce practitioner research still is and to puzzling over the question "Why don't practitioners engage in research?" (pp. 67-88). Without overlooking well-known constraints such as their lack of time and resources, possible lack of

expertise, and the lack of relevance of general research agendas/findings for practitioners' everyday activities, the author adds a general aspect of "lack of respect" for practitioners (pp. 73-75). Hanks argues that one of the foci in EP is to bridge the gap between classroom life and academic research. Therefore, it may contribute to the understanding of practitioners as respected contributors to language education theory rather than just disempowered consumers of academic knowledge.

The act of opposing practitioner disempowerment is understood as foundational to EP's particularities, since its origins lie in the recognition that teachers were already puzzling over their own classes and reaching insights into their practices before. Therefore, traditional research tools (such as structured and semi-structured interviews) could become an imposition and a burden in the lives of already overworked teachers. Having respect as a starting point, Hanks presents a three-stage evolutionary process for EP's framework. Through this process, practitioners gradually shifted their focus from a theory-from-practice perspective of their work, to a focus on understanding classroom practice in order to put "quality of life first" (p. 97).

Quality of life is understood as a challenge to the "work/life balance" of practitioners (p. 101). Understanding the lives of teachers and learners in the classroom, without polarizing what needs to be taught and what is being experienced, is at the very core of EP's proposals. Hanks explores the relationship between putting quality of life first and "promoting puzzlement" as "a way of developing profound understandings – of our practice, of our world, of each other – not superficial solutions" (p. 109).

Part Two, *Developing understandings from practice*, reinforces the importance of resisting mandatory change, considered to be "endemic, but in the end superficial, because there's always another change just around the corner" (p. 135). It examines how change and improvement may turn into "tools of oppression" (p. 137) for teachers, leading to their general lack of engagement. In order to illustrate how to tackle these concerns in everyday practice, the author highlights the importance of practitioners' autonomy and agency in knowledge construction and decision making, particularly within the constraints of their working situations.

The attitude of questioning classroom practices, framed by the complex power relations established within educational systems, is construed as a dare. However, Part Two not only highlights the need for practice-based understandings, but also provides experienced and willing practitioners a sense of companionship through EP. It opens with a "message to practitioners wondering about EP" (p. 139), in the words of the Brazilian educational psychologist and EP practitioner Carolina Apolinario. In fact, the whole section is organized around

testimonials based on questions like: “Why did you become interested in EP? How did you use EP in your context?” and “What puzzled you/your learners?” (p. 143).

Case studies in Part Two are presented in the practitioners’ own voices, allowing for a multi-layered view on how principles of EP are adapted to different contexts. While considering puzzles such as “Why are some students not interested in learning English?” (pp. 149-152) and “Why do my students want lectures while I want discussion?” (pp. 161-165), readers are invited to reflect upon the process of re-signifying regular classroom activities as Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activities (PEPAs): opportunities to work for understanding quality of life in a way that allows for sustainability over time.

Part Three, *Understandings for Practice*, invites readers to consider each of the EP principles through a “meta-puzzling” procedure (pp. 219-226), resorting to their formulation into a network of seven corollary sentences (Allwright and Hanks, 2009). Principle one - “Quality of life for language teachers and learners is the most appropriate central concern for practitioner research in our field” (p. 224) - is questioned with “Why is ‘quality of life’ often portrayed as somehow easy, or soft, or gentle? Can quality of life also mean working hard, grappling with the unknown, struggling to find meaning?” (p. 225). Likewise, principles two to seven, which focus on *working for understanding* (principle two), *collegiality* (principles three, four, and five), and *sustainability* (principles six and seven), undergo reflective scrutiny, supported by theoretical contributions from the field of Applied Linguistics and beyond.

Part Three also guides readers through the most common practical processes of EP. They are invited to 1) *puzzle over their own practices, and pose their own questions*, based on their own appreciation of what is relevant considering their practices. The next move suggests that they 2) *refine puzzled questions*, by sharing their puzzles with fellow practitioners in the field. This second step also entails debating how puzzles are formulated: from possibly prescriptive ‘how’ questions to more open ‘why’ questions. The final move involves 3) *the collaborative process of creating a PEPA*.

Part Four, the *Resources* section, closes the book with the voices of pivotal figures in the EP field, starting with Dick Allwright, who originally highlighted the importance of respect for practitioners’ agendas, based on his experience while coaching a group of English teachers in Rio de Janeiro. Allwright has profusely theorized on what was first named “Exploratory Teaching” (p. 89) and his words underline Hanks’ whole work, as expected from their previous collaborative publication (Allwright and Hanks, 2009). Following up on his account, Hanks interviews Bebel Cunha and Inés Miller, both academics at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de

Janeiro, who have accompanied and developed EP’s and Allwright’s activities since their very beginning. Assia Slimani-Rolls (Regent’s University, London) and Akira Tajino (Kyoto University, Japan) also contribute with insights from their specific contexts, in a section that closes self-reflectively with a text in which Hanks interviews herself, answering the same questions she has posed to her colleagues.

One could say that *Exploratory Practice in Language Teaching* fails at conveying a conventional academic panorama of EP’s theoretical support, in the sense that its rhetoric does not follow the traditional configuration of neatly introducing all of the analytical tools it will use to investigate its practice collection. As previously stated, concepts are reintroduced at different moments in the book only to be further critiqued, since each new thematic unit (and each new approach to the reader) leads to new puzzles and understandings. However, this is precisely what makes the book such an important contribution to practitioner research for it not only discusses praxis as a viable option in the education field, but also adopts a thoughtful writing methodology which resonates with the experience being portrayed. This effort, alone, is worth the reading.

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## Biodata

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## A Review of Research Notes, Issue 64: The Impact of Creativity on Teaching Practices

### By Michael Riskus

*Research Notes*, a quarterly publication of Cambridge English, focuses on research, test development and validation. At the heart of issue 64 is the impact of creativity on teaching practices. As is often the case in this series, this issue spotlights action research and specifically seven papers from the 2015 English Australia/Cambridge English Action Research in ELICOS Program. The goal, it seems to me, is to show the link between creativity in the classroom and action

research. The journal also features an introduction by Anne Burns, the scheme's action research mentor.

The introduction sets the tone by addressing three necessary points: a definition of creativity, a brief description of creativity in the ELT classroom and finally the role of creativity in action research. One can look at creativity in a number of ways, but the two most popular are to think of it as a product or as a process. Burns cites Teresa Amabile, who sees ideas as the central products of creativity and defines creativity as "the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or small group of individuals working together" (1988: 126). Conversely, if viewing creativity as a process, Burns argues that it is useful to look at the work of Torrance (1993) which is an extension of the classic Wallas definition (1926). This process is very similar to the look-think-act cycle commonly used in action research. However, for the purposes of this issue, Burns argues against pigeonholing all approaches into one of these two definitions, and posits a third that combines the two. This third view of creativity considers it a combination of process and product.

When considering the ELT classroom, creativity is almost always viewed as a positive thing (Maley, 2015, as cited by Burns, 2016). Burns makes it a point to show that rigid curricula, prescribed materials and testing schemes can be seen as obstacles to creativity, but she argues that creativity can thrive in such conditions, which is in line with my experience, if teachers are open-minded and, above all, flexible, but more on that later. The last part of Burns' introduction highlights the connection between action research and creativity. Burns finishes with a profound comparison between the two that reveals both: deal with assessment, look both to the past and future, are dynamic and cyclical, and reshape ideas until a useful solution is found.

In my view, Michelle Ocriciano's study, *IELTS Writing: A Gamification Journey*, offers a really good example of creativity being defined as both a process, similar to action research, and a product, similar to an action research intervention. Noticing a lack of motivation and engagement in her IELTS preparation course (as many test prep faculty, in my experience, tend to do), she began her action research project by making inquiries concerning her students' opinions and preferences. She found that students considered the writing portion of the IELTS exam the most challenging and that most preferred the use of tech tools when studying. She also found that **all** of her students enjoyed video games. Using this information, she developed her intervention, which mirrors the first two stages of the creativity process outlined above. She observed the current situation and thought about the possibilities. The action research intervention, or creative product, was a gamified test preparation course. She primarily used five main digital games in which students could earn

points while engaging in semi-autonomous learning experience. Motivation was also increased through the use of digital badges, another part of the creative product envisioned by Ocriciano. Lastly, a leaderboard was used to further motivate students. One interesting feature of this study is that the games and badges were the intervention being tested and verified. An entirely new technology was introduced in order to motivate students. The leaderboard, though, utilized existing technology. The game scores were fed through the school's learning management system, Moodle. Here we see another one of Burns' points from the introduction. Creativity does not necessarily need to be an entirely new idea, but rather a new way of using existing structures.

I have chosen to start by reviewing Ocriciano's article because it touches on nearly all of the recurring themes included in the seven studies. In most of the studies, teacher researchers are looking at improving student writing, oftentimes through the use of technology. One repeated goal in these studies is to increase student motivation and to develop more autonomous learners.

Nearly all of the studies described in *Research Notes* issue 64 focus in some way on improving student writing. Two deal specifically with motivating students to do more with feedback they receive on their writing. The first is by James Heath and Bianka Malecka, who focused on ePortfolios as a way of increasing student engagement with the writing process. Portfolios, both traditional and digital, of course, are fairly commonplace in the classroom. They serve as effective ways of showing students' progress over a period of time. If done well, they can also include reflective portions in which students consider their own learning and growth. Heath and Malecka, though, wanted to do even more. They noticed two things in their classroom: students who regularly redrafted their writing performed better than those that did not and those that did not were the majority of students. This being the case, they sought to find a way to motivate students to engage in the redrafting of their writing. They set up a wikispaces classroom so that they could offer teacher feedback in a digital manner. Students, though, were also required to give peer feedback to their classmates. They found that this type of feedback made the error correction very visible, not only for the student who was receiving the feedback, but also for the students who were giving it. Although students still preferred to receive feedback from their teachers, there were several instances where peer feedback led to discussions as to whether the feedback was correct or not. This ultimately led to more critical thinking as well. Although this was not the intended focus of the action research project, it serves as a good example of what unexpected results can emerge from conducting action research if one has an open mind.

The second article that focuses specifically on error correction was written by Min Jung Jang and Jackson Howard who also wanted to motivate students to do more with their teacher feedback when it came to error correction. The teacher researchers engaged in the process of creativity by looking at their classroom to identify a problem and came up with a creative solution (product) to help students. They used a feed forward approach to highlight common errors made by students and pre-taught the language skills necessary to avoid these errors. The goal was to help students become more autonomous and to drive their own learning. Jang and Howard also implemented a self-editing checklist, which in and of itself does not seem to be all that creative, but the way in which it was used was. But, perhaps the most creative thing about this action research study was the “side-effects” of doing it. The authors noted that they began the study in an attempt to better motivate their students to do error correction. They wanted their students to be more reflective when it came to the process of writing. In the end, though, they found that action research was a vehicle for themselves to be more reflective in their teaching. Technology was used in this study, but only in the background. Their institution’s learning management system, BlackBoard, was often underutilized by students but because that is where the self-editing checklist was placed, students were using it more often. So another benefit of the study was an increased utilization of tools available to students to help manage their own learning.

A final article that is not centered about technology is Christa Snyman’s look at the effects of using a guided writing task on learners. Learner autonomy, specifically in writing, was the focus of this study. Frustrated by the slow rate of progress, and the lack of integration of target language skills in her classes, she set up a guided writing task. The guided writing tasks were the intervention here, and allowed for scaffolding to occur into the zone of proximal development. The guided writing tasks themselves were quite creative, and definitely a way of thinking outside of the box. They included writing practice, of course, but also reflection and goal setting components. These tasks not only led to improved writing products, but a better understanding from students that writing is a process. Through her intervention, Snyman was able to increase learner autonomy, but also able to reduce test anxiety that many students face when dealing with high stakes timed writing such as the IELTS exam.

The strengths of *Research Notes* issue 64 lie in how clearly it shows numerous ways in which conducting action research has allowed teachers to be more creative in their approaches to teaching the English language. It also demonstrates the flexibility that teachers have when undertaking action research. Oftentimes, as stated in the case studies within, research foci change or contexts shift. The cyclical nature of action research allows for this to be addressed.

Teacher researchers often find out a lot about their students and situations even beyond their own research questions as action research helps them become more observant, more systematic and in some cases, more curious. Within these pages are several really great situations for how to improve the instruction of writing, especially if you are interested in the role of technology in the teaching. However, this nearly singular focus may leave other readers wanting more. Teachers who are looking for new, creative ways of teaching reading comprehension or speaking fluency will not find much of interest in this issue. Now, to be clear, there is nothing wrong with there being so many studies devoted to using action research to find new, more creative ways to teach writing, but perhaps that should have been worked into the theme of the journal’s issue. Furthermore, what is very deliberately included in the journal’s introduction is a focus on creativity. The studies presented do show creative ways of addressing problems of practice through engaging in action research, but within the articles themselves, there is no mention of creativity at all. Having the authors spotlight the creative nature of what they were doing in their classrooms may have helped unify the journal as a whole a bit better.

Another strength of the journal is that each of the action research studies’ write ups concludes with a section that allows the writers to reflect, not only on their individual action research projects, but on the process of conducting action research in general. The sections, often entitled “reflections and implications,” also show the direction that future cycles of action research might take. I feel that this is a very useful portion of the write ups as it gives the teacher researchers a voice, and there is a level of transparency as they are not necessarily experts in the action research field. The fact, though, that each and every article concludes in the same way highlights one final weakness of the issue. The seven studies reported in *Research Notes* issue 64 were all written by participants in an ELICOS program guided by Anne Burns. They all followed a very similar structure in being written up and in the introductions it often states that “the focus of our action research project was...” Due to this stylistic consistency across studies (which may reflect the editing) it almost feels like the writers were conducting the action research not out of a genuine desire, but as part of the scheme of which they were members, even if this was not the case. Some spontaneity would have been nice. There is, nevertheless, value in this work, even if it was not spontaneous. Doing action research is better than not doing it, but it often comes off as inauthentic in this journal, as if the researchers were doing it because they had to rather than because they had a genuine interest in the problem that they were facing, although these problems sometimes seemed contrived in service of the action research project.

The implications, though, could be quite large. Even if these studies were done from a “have to” stance, they at

least exposed the researchers to action research. Whether they continue with further cycles of their existing studies, or engage in new action research, the potential to conduct research now exists where perhaps it did not before. I've seen this very thing happen, as my first experience with action research was done because I had to as part of my doctoral studies. But since completing that study nearly ten years ago, I have gone on to conduct numerous other studies, not because I had to, but because I had seen, first-hand, how to enact change through action research. There can be no action research without an introduction to the methods, and forced or not, it can open one's eyes to new possibilities.

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## Biodata

Dr. A. Michael Riskus earned his EdD in Teaching Innovation and Leadership from Arizona State University in 2011 following on his MSc in Secondary English Education from Hofstra University. Most recently, he earned a Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) from the British Council in 2016. His research interests include effective professional development and he has presented on the topics of professional learning communities and exploratory practice both regionally and internationally.

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**Gkonou, C., Daubney, M., & Dewaele, J. M. (Eds.). (2017). *New insights into language anxiety: Theory, research and educational implications*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Multilingual Matters.**

## Reviewed by Jhon Cuesta Medina

Gkonou, Daubney, and Dewaele's anthology is a very comprehensive collection that includes all major approaches and current lines of research in the field of language anxiety. It includes historical trends and assumptions, fresh perspectives on theory and research

on language anxiety, along with their practical implications for the language classroom. This anthology updates the volume entitled *Affect in foreign language and second language learning: A practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere*, edited by Young (1999). The contributors to the present volume not only provide a complete overview of language anxiety research since its origins but also (re)conceptualize it within the current paradigm shift in the SLA field (shaped and influenced by complex dynamic systems theory and the rise of the field of language learning psychology).

This volume can be perused by established and less experienced SLA researchers (i.e. Master or Ph.D. students) and applied linguists who can benefit from the suggested frameworks and methodologies to generate further research on this multifaceted emotion. Teacher trainers, teachers, and undergraduate students can also benefit from this volume since it provides them with multiple opportunities to learn how to identify and potentially alleviate language anxiety. Thus, this anthology has the potential to inform SLA research, teacher education and pedagogy, as well as language learning for years to come.

In Chapter 1, an introductory chapter, the editors provide a description of how researching language anxiety has evolved, given the growing influence of complexity and dynamic systems theory, and present an overview of the three main parts of this anthology: a. theoretical insights; b. empirical investigations; and c. implications for practice.

## Part 1: Theoretical Insights

The first part, "Theoretical Insights", contains two chapters. In chapter 2, McIntyre suggests three broad approaches/phases to synthesize the evolution of the field of language anxiety: *confounded*, *specialized*, and *dynamic*. A *confounded approach* represents the initial research attempts to understand language anxiety. Researchers from this phase confounded multiple types of anxiety, employed inconsistent measures, and reported on findings that were not necessarily related to language learning. A *specialized approach* emerged in response to the lack of specific concepts and measures of language-related anxiety. Researchers here explored the relationship between language anxiety, specific language processes, and other learner factors such as personality, perceived language competence, willingness to communicate, perfectionism, among others. Lastly, a *dynamic approach* represents the most recent line of research on language anxiety since it depicts anxiety as a complex emotion that fluctuates over time and that constantly interacts with multiple learner and situational factors. In this chapter, McIntyre not only provides trends in the development of language anxiety research but also helps us reflect and develop a critical and updated stance on three long-standing issues: (a) anxiety can be both facilitating and debilitating, with the latter being a more accurate

conceptualization according to MacIntyre; (b) anxiety can be both a cause and a consequence of performance; and (c) language anxiety has both internal and social dimensions.

Chapter 3 is Elaine Horwitz' long overdue response on the misreading of Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986). Horwitz argues that back in 1986, the authors did not suggest, as some researchers later misinterpreted, that foreign language classroom anxiety was a combination of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. This misreading emerged from the findings of some factor analytic studies that attempted to identify components of language anxiety. However, as Horwitz argues, these are only three examples of specific anxieties and by no means represent the components of language anxiety. Horwitz' call for more research that not only helps to understand the nature of language anxiety but also helps to alleviate its debilitating aspects to ultimately "make language learning more comfortable for vulnerable learners" (p. 44) is also worth mentioning.

## Part 2: Empirical Investigations

The second part contains six studies with a wide range of frameworks and methodologies across different populations. Chapter 4, by Şimşek and Dörnyei, presents the findings of a study that collected qualitative interviews with highly anxious Turkish learners of English from four different universities. Interestingly, the findings of these interviews led the authors to introduce the concept of the anxious self and to use a three-tiered framework of personality proposed by McAdams (2006) to examine the participants' anxious manifestations and experiences. The model consists of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life narratives. These components are relevant for us, teachers and researchers, since we could help learners to construct narratives about their overall anxious selves, which in turn might offer "a way to reprocess their anxiety-related experiences positively, thereby combating some of the harmful effects of debilitating anxiety" (p. 66).

In Chapter 5, Jean-Marc Dewaele employs the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost et al., 1990) and its Japanese adaptation to examine the relationship between foreign language anxiety and perfectionism on a large scale (an international sample of adult English FL users, a sample of Saudi university students, and a sample of Japanese high school students studying English as a foreign language). Implications for further research, although not explicitly mentioned, can be deduced from Dewaele's study.

Chapter 6 is a mixed-methods study by King and Smith. They examine the relationship between social anxiety and the silences of 924 learners studying English as a foreign language in Japan. Particularly interesting are the use of a structured observation approach (minute-by-minute observation of the students' silence) and the inclusion of some suggestions to reduce social anxiety

and increase oral production (i.e. promoting acceptance among class members, emphasizing on fluency rather than accuracy, using video-feedback to gain a more realistic understanding of how they actually appear to others, among others).

In chapter 7, Gregersen, MacIntyre, and Olson provide a relevant example of the use of dynamic research techniques, in this particular study - Idiodynamic method (MacIntyre, 2012) - to investigate moment-to-moment fluctuations in anxiety among L2 speakers. An important implication is drawn from this study: teachers can develop some degree of sensitivity to nonverbal anxiety cues, allowing them to identify those students who suffer from anxiety and to develop strategies that might alleviate the debilitating aspects of this emotion. Clearly, both teacher trainers and teachers should consider the cues that are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 8, by Gkonou, investigates language anxiety of Greek EFL students on the basis of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) nested ecosystems model. Gkonou discusses, in detail, this novel ecological perspective and posits important insights on the study of language anxiety. Although the influence of the four layers of Bronfenbrenner's model (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) on the language anxiety of her sample is documented, further research is needed to test the validity of this theoretical framework to explore language anxiety and perhaps other emotions in different settings.

The second part of this anthology concludes with Chapter 9, by Tóth, who reports on the foreign language anxiety of Advanced Hungarian EFL learners. The author makes relevant contributions to the field of language anxiety, going beyond the implicit yet flawed assumption that L2 anxiety is specific to learners at lower levels of language competence. I must highlight that this article alone provides at least five ideas for future studies.

## Part 3: Implications for Practice

The last part of this anthology is composed of two contributions. In Chapter 10, Rebecca Oxford provides helpful strategies/interventions to alleviate the debilitating and negative aspects of anxiety. She incorporates ideas from traditional psychology to tackle issues of social anxiety and generalized anxiety and from positive psychology to promote strategies that increase positive emotions, flow, agency, hope, and optimism. This is one of the many chapters in this volume that can be perused by teachers, who need to realize that, as Oxford argues, "with assistance, anxious language learners can develop acceptance [of their own thoughts and worries], along with the commitment to continue learning" (p. 191). I must note, though, that since this chapter introduces many different concepts from traditional and positive psychology, it might be quite challenging for readers who are not familiar with the field. Fortunately, Oxford provides a list of updated

references that can contribute to the understanding of the chapter.

Chapter 11, by Rubio-Alcalá, concludes this last section by explaining the differences between multiple concepts that have often been confused and/or equated: anxiety, fear, anguish or stress and self-esteem, self-concept, and self-efficacy. Like Oxford, he provides several strategies to be applied in the classroom, emphasizing on the need to build teachers and students' rapport, to introduce explicit discussions of anxiety and emotions in class, to promote a learner-centered methodology, and to design activities not only to learn the target language but also to "reduce anxiety and empower self-esteem" (p. 211). Some sample activities along with their corresponding references are included by Rubio-Alcalá.

The final chapter contains the editors' concluding remarks. They skillfully synthesize the three main parts of this volume on language anxiety, namely theory, research, and classroom implications, and provide directions for further research.

The applied nature and constant evolution of the field of language anxiety make this anthology a must read for less experienced and seasoned researchers. Although putting most current research into a single anthology is rather challenging, the editors and contributors succeed in achieving such a goal. They accurately address and represent the current complex and dynamic systems approaches in which anxiety is viewed as a complex construct that needs to be conceptualized in conjunction with multiple language experiences and psychological factors. The inclusion of new conceptual frameworks and methods (e.g. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) nested ecosystems model, McIntyre's idiodynamic method) to study language anxiety clearly provides important theoretical insights, implications for the classroom, and more importantly, many unanswered questions that will keep research going for the next few years.

This anthology can also become an essential resource for fellow teachers since it provides concrete strategies and step-by-step activities that can be used to identify anxious students, to reduce their anxiety, and to promote positive emotions. It is worth mentioning that even though many of the concepts and strategies presented in this volume might be difficult to understand for readers who are not familiar with the field of language anxiety, the editors and contributors have done an outstanding job in compiling the most relevant and up-to-date references. All of those who are interested in expanding their understanding on this negative emotion will surely take advantage of these resources.

In a nutshell, this volume contains enough ideas to be digested by the intended audiences, to help them keep theorizing on language anxiety, to further research on the field, and to have a clear impact on what matters the most, language learning.

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## Biodata

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# Teachers Research! Istanbul 2018

**Bahçeşehir University,  
Istanbul  
8–9 June 2018**

This will be IATEFL Research SIG's fourth annual conference in Turkey for practitioner researchers and those mentoring teacher-research. The primary goal of the conference is to bring together teacher-researchers across Turkey and beyond to support the growing international movement of teachers as researchers and knowledge creators for themselves, their students and their schools.

This conference is participant-centred, with teachers being viewed as at the centre of knowledge construction rather than the 'receivers' of expert knowledge. The format of the conference promotes interaction among presenters and listeners by allowing ample discussion time after brief presentations of studies. In this way, teachers are encouraged to communicate their ideas, and to get and give feedback freely.

The conference also features plenary papers and workshops by speakers including Gary Barkhuizen, Kenan Dikilitaş, Ayşen Güven, Angi Malderez, Ece Topkaya and Mark Wyatt.

*The difference between this year's event and the previous ones is that this year's will elaborate upon the personal research experiences of EAP/ESP/ELT teachers as researchers who address the challenges they have encountered during their practices.*

Please contact [kenan.dikilitas@bau.edu.tr](mailto:kenan.dikilitas@bau.edu.tr) if you have any questions.

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# IATEFL Joint Research SIG and Learner Autonomy SIG PCE, Brighton, 9 April 2018

## Learner Autonomy and Practitioner Research

Language learner autonomy has been and remains a key concept in ELT. However, there is a notable lack of classroom-based research into learner autonomy in practice. As a result, in this PCE, we will bring together two SIGs with a joint interest in precisely these two topics: The Learner Autonomy SIG and the Research SIG.

Phil Benson, Macquarie University, Australia and Judith Hanks, University of Leeds, UK, will be our keynote speakers. Phil will start the day, with a discussion of spaces for autonomy inside and outside the classroom. Following his talk, a number of interactive poster presentations by teachers/researchers will provide us with further food for thought.

After lunch, Judith will focus on learners and teachers as co-researchers, integrating research and pedagogy. Phil and Judith will then together invite questions and comments from the audience as well as initiating discussions in the group. At the end of the day poster presenters will report back on the feedback that they received during their presentations. There will be ample time for participants to discuss projects and establish networks before the day ends at 17.00.

We hope that you, as an EFL teacher/ practitioner researcher, will be prepared to share your own experiences and insights into the topic of the day. We shall be looking forward to welcoming you in Brighton 2018 for an enriching day.

## PCE Schedule

10.00	Welcome & opening of day
10.15	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plenary by Phil Benson</b> <i>Spaces for Autonomy</i></p> <p>What does pedagogy for autonomy mean beyond the classroom? Using the idea of language learning environments, I will suggest approaches to exploratory collaborative search that might help answer this question and help students develop autonomy inside and outside the classroom.</p>
10:45	16 poster presentations including coffee
P O S T E R  P R E S E N T E R S	<p><b>Amie Dussurget-Quesnell:</b> <i>Using Digital Technology and Classroom Modifications to Foster Learner Autonomy</i></p> <p><b>Ana Inés Salvi:</b> <i>Exploring Criticality Development via Pedagogy for Autonomy, Exploratory, Practice and arts-informed Research Methods</i></p> <p><b>Anja Burkert:</b> <i>Practitioner Research as a Way to Improve Classroom Practice</i></p> <p><b>Dorte Asmussen:</b> <i>Logbooks as a Tool for Practitioner Research</i></p> <p><b>Gamze Sayram:</b> <i>My Journey as a Researcher: The Bee in the Beehive</i></p> <p><b>Jo Mynard:</b> <i>Researching Autonomy and Identity Beyond the Classroom</i></p> <p><b>Katja Heim &amp; Stephan Gabel:</b> <i>Action Research in Preservice Teacher Education: A Step towards Autonomy?</i></p> <p><b>Leena Karlsson:</b> <i>"Mindful Listeners and Artful Inquirers" - How to be both in Practising and Researching Learner Autonomy through Stories</i></p> <p><b>Lesley Fearn:</b> <i>An Enquiry into EFL and Online Community Platforms in Secondary Schools</i></p> <p><b>Michelle Tamala:</b> <i>Critical Moments - a Personal Search for the Missing Links in the Development of Learner Autonomy</i></p> <p><b>Micòl Beseghi &amp; Greta Bertolotti:</b> <i>Using Technology to Enhance Teacher and Learner Autonomy: Collaborative Approach</i></p> <p><b>Nouf Ahmed Alhejaily:</b> <i>An Investigation of Learner Autonomy as Perceived by Female Teachers and Students of English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Secondary Schools</i></p> <p><b>Pablo Fernando Marchisio &amp; Ana Laura Barbosa:</b> <i>Enhancing Learner Autonomy through Creativity and Digital Story-telling</i></p> <p><b>Rhadhika Chebrol:</b> <i>Technology for First Generation Learners</i></p> <p><i>Rhian Webb: Classroom and Assessment Research through the Lens of Exploratory Practice - Courage to Think outside the Box about Autonomy</i></p> <p><b>Tanya McCarthy:</b> <i>One Year Later: Students' Visualization of 'Independent-mindedness' in the 12 University Classroom</i></p>
13.00	Lunch break
14.00	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plenary by Judith Hanks</b> <i>The Nimbus of Research: Learners and Teachers as Autonomous Explorers of Practice</i></p> <p>The notion of research has long dominated the fields of applied linguistics and language education. In this talk I consider Exploratory Practice, a form of 'fully inclusive practitioner research', in which learners as well as teachers are invited to research their own learning and teaching practices. I argue that both parts can be researchers with robust questions, creative practices, and profound insights into their praxis.</p>
14.30	<b>Follow-up on plenary talks – moderated by Phil Benson and Judith Hanks</b>
15.30	<p style="text-align: center;">Coffee break</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Participants and poster presenters put up ideas for future action plans on posters)</p>
16.00	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Future action plans</b></p> <p>Groups are formed around topics for future action plans to be discussed, including possibilities for setting up networks.</p>
16.45	<b>Evaluation and winding-up of day</b>

# Research SIG showcase day

## IATEFL Conference, 11th April 2018

Time	Name	Title of session
10:20	Nadia Sintotskaya	<i>Students' self-reflection as a diagnostic tool in ELT (talk)</i>
11:05	Katherine Halet	<i>A case study on Argentinian teacher educator emotions and pedagogy (talk)</i>
12:05	Sian Etherington	<i>Talking together about EFL research: issues, challenges and ways forward (workshop)</i>
Break		
14:15	Daniel Xerri	<i>Supporting teacher-researchers through the development of research literacy (talk)</i>
15:00	IATEFL Research Special Interest Group Open Forum	
16:00	Marina Bendtsen	<i>Exploring the use of action research projects in teacher education (talk)</i>
16:45	Chris Farrell	<i>Creating a national research scheme for teaching (talk)</i>
17:30	Nicola Perry	<i>Research in language teaching: asking the right questions (workshop)</i>



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