

# ELT RESEARCH

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The newsletter of the IATEFL  
Research Special Interest Group

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Typesetting, layout, and cover design by Matthew Ager ([ager@hey.com](mailto:ager@hey.com)).

## 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: [resig.weebly.com](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 [iatefl.org](http://iatefl.org) or you can contact IATEFL Head Office at:

IATEFL

2-3 The Foundry, Seager Road, Faversham ME13 7FD, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 1795 591414 Fax: +44 (0) 1795 538951

Email: [generalenquiries@iatefl.org](mailto:generalenquiries@iatefl.org)

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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 [d.banegas@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:d.banegas@warwick.ac.uk). Please visit the SIG website [resig.weebly.com/write-an-article-for-elt-research](http://resig.weebly.com/write-an-article-for-elt-research)

# Contents

Contents	iii
Editorial	v
Ana Inés Salvi: From the Coordinator	vi
Ruijin Yang: Learning oriented assessment: Classroom activities in high-stakes test preparation classes	1
V. K. Karthika: Teacher perceived problems and solutions in ESL classrooms of tribal learners	8
Dr Christine Xavier: Integrating grammar and writing: Teachers' reflections on the potential for student empowerment	14
Silvia Severino and Mariana Serra: Mentoring English language teachers to use action research in teaching writing	19
Cherise Shi Ling Teo: Developing teacher identity and influencing practice through research	24
Rhian Webb: Book Review: <i>Mentoring teachers to research their classrooms: A practical guide</i> (2020)	29
Leandro Novaes da Silva: Exploratory Practice: Understanding monotony in my English classes	31
Veronica Marquez Moreno: Natural speech in the globalized era: Reading and telling stories in the EFL classroom	36
Erin Coyle: Exploratory action research: Competitive games to motivate foundation students	41
Elena Ončevska Ager: Using the arts to support student teacher reflection: Towards 'thirdspace' thinking	45
Lorena Salud Gadella Kamstra: Responding to EFL teacher demotivation by engaging in reflection	51
Ameena Kidwai: Escalating learner participation in a language classroom	58
Asantha U. Attanayake: Language attitude anxiety and lack of confidence to speak English	64
Roxana Carolina Perca Chagua and Fernanda Ramos Machado: Short movie production to contribute to students' learning process in the EFL classroom: An international experience Peru-Brazil	75
Nathan Thomas and Agata Mikołajewska: Reflections on Going Global 2020's 'English Medium: During and post-COVID-19': Takeaways for future research	82
Dr Robbie Lee Sabnani: Researching teaching practice: Critical reflections on enhancing robustness of qualitative studies	87
Assia Slimani-Rolls & Chris Banister: IATEFL ReSIG online discussion: Practitioner Research as a principled framework for continuing professional development for English language teachers	92
Erzsébet Ágnes Békés: Mentoring Ecuadorian university teachers and students in the collaborative write-up phase of their Exploratory Action Research	97
Bronwyn Latham: MA ELT Quick Fire Presentation Event – A reflective report	103
Introduction to MA ELT Quick Fire Presentation Event brief reports and narrated slides	108
Dean Webber: Self-study learning strategies: An investigation into the use of English language audio-visual media in proficient adult English language learners	109
Liu Siwei (Shirley): 'Can you have your cake and eat it?' A small-scale exploratory study of the influence of neoliberalism on managerial practices at private LTOs in China	111
Artemis Topouzi: Willingness to communicate in English as an L2: Investigating Greek learners' perspectives and their teacher's strategies	113
Rhian Webb: Review of <i>Mentoring Teachers to Research their Classrooms: A Practical Handbook</i> by Richard Smith (British Council, 2020)	115
IATEFL ReSIG PCE: The role of Research in English Language Teaching and Teacher Education	117



# Editorial

**Darío Luis Banegas**

**Emily Edwards**

**Jessica Mackay**

**Elena Ončevska Ager**

We are delighted to bring you the latest issue (Issue 36) of *ELT Research*, an IATEFL Research Special Interest Group (ReSIG) annual publication. You may notice that we have introduced a new layout and overall design. Thanks go to Elena Ončevska Ager and Matthew Ager.

This issue is a festival of diversity in terms of voices, topics, and contexts. The articles included come from practitioners, teacher educators as well as masters students.

As in previous issues, the issue features research reports, reflective reports, conference reports together with two book reviews on the same book by two different colleagues with the same name!

We truly hope that you enjoy reading the contributions and that you feel tempted to submitting your manuscript for potential publication in 2022.

## About the editors of this issue of *ELT Research*



Darío Luis Banegas is a lecturer in TESOL in the University of Strathclyde, an associate fellow with the University of Warwick, and an online teacher educator for Argentinian teacher education programmes. In South America, he is a regular visiting lecturer in the following areas: action research, curriculum development, CLIL, and initial English language teacher education.



Jessica Mackay (DipTEFLA, MA & PhD in Applied Linguistics) is an EFL teacher and head of teacher training at the Escola d'Idiomes Moderns (EIM), of the University of Barcelona.

Jessica is Barcelona Area Coordinator for TESOL-Spain. She is coordinator of the *ELT Research in Action* conference (supported by the IATEFL ReSIG) and is co-editor of the conference publication.



Emily Edwards is a Lecturer in Academic Language and Learning at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia. Her key areas of interest include action research, teacher education, academic literacies and sociocultural theory. She has previously designed, taught, and coordinated teacher and language education programmes in Australia, Asia and Europe.



Elena Ončevska Ager is Associate Professor at Saints Cyril and Methodius University, North Macedonia. She teaches language teacher education courses, supporting the development of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers, in face-to-face and online contexts. Her research interests include mentoring, motivation, professional wellbeing and teacher agency.

## From the Coordinator

### Ana Inés Salvi

Dear Research SIG members, Happy New Year! It is great to see another issue (36) of *ELT Research* coming out. Thank you to all the contributors and the editors for bringing such a fantastic array of reports, articles and reviews on ELT research together.

The past year has been a challenge to everyone around the world due to the pandemic. The IATEFL Annual Conference and the PCE had to be postponed and we have had to adapt to this unprecedented situation as best as we could. We also had changes in the committee. Long standing members completed their term (Mark Wyatt, Yasmin Dar, Larysa Sanotska and Sian Etherington) and others stepped down (Kenan Dikilitas, Chris Banister, Amol Padwad and Seher Balbay). New members shortly joined in (Marisol Guzman Cora, Graham Hall, Celia Antoniou Vasiliiki, Erik Ekembe, Richard Smith and more recently Prem Phyak) and started working together and developing all kinds of initiatives, publications, online events, webinars and discussions despite the challenges.

Below is a list of the current committee members. I am very proud and lucky to be working with such a diverse team of talented people whose joint effort has achieved marvels! A big thank you to all of them for their great work!



**Coordinator:** Ana Inés Salvi.

**Treasurer & Online Discussion Board Moderator:** Graham Hall.

**Publications Officer:** Richard Smith.

**Newsletter Co-editor:** Darío Luis Banegas.

**Newsletter Co-editor:** Emily Edwards.

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**Outreach Co-coordinator:** Marisol Guzman Cova.

**Outreach Co-coordinator:** Eric Ekembe.

**Membership and Scholarship Officer:** Prem Phyak.

**PCE and Event Organiser:** Loreto Aliaga.

**Web and Digital Media Manager:** Ernesto Vargas Gil.

**Events and Webinar Officer:** Celia V. Antoniou.

Next I will mention the discussions, teacher-research events, publications, conferences, and webinars we have had in the past year and highlight the events to come!

### Online discussions

ReSIG has moved its online discussions to Google Groups. In February 2020 Chris Banister moderated a discussion with Sardar Anwaruddin on the latter's work on 'Knowledge Mobilisation in TESOL' in the context of the research-practice gap in the field. In January 2021, Graham Hall is moderating a discussion on '(How) do teachers read research, why, and (how) does it help them/us in the classroom and beyond?' based on a published article that has been made freely accessible on our website. A big thank you to *ELTJ* for this! For further details about our online discussions please check our website on: [resig.weebly.com/online-discussions](http://resig.weebly.com/online-discussions).

### Teacher Research Events

ReSIG has been promoting teacher research around the world and working on a wide range of initiatives with the same aim: to empower teachers and learners to investigate issues which are relevant to their classroom realities; and to promote and highlight the importance of bottom-up approaches to research and innovation in the field. Below I am listing the teacher-research initiatives we have been involved in in the past year.

#### Mentoring teacher-research

In January and February 2020 ReSIG supported a TESOL International Electronic Village Online initiative on mentoring teacher-research, which was moderated by Richard Smith and Seden Eraldemir Tuyan. A series of webinars, tasks and discussion activities were offered to help develop a worldwide community of teacher-research mentors.

### *Supporting Teacher Research in Africa Online*

Following from the TESOL Africa Pre-Conference Event ‘Teachers in Action: Exploring Global Issues through Classroom Research’ that ReSIG and GISIG jointly organised and held on 8th August 2019 in Abuja, ReSIG supported teacher participants develop their research projects via mentoring, webinars and discussions online. ReSIG jointly with Africa TESOL are working on a publication of the teacher research reports which will come out soon and be freely accessible on our website. To find out more about this project, please visit our website on: [resig.weebly.com/resig-gisig-project-with-africa-tesol](http://resig.weebly.com/resig-gisig-project-with-africa-tesol).

### **MEXTESOL Conference**

In October 2020 ReSIG supported the 47th MEXTESOL Conference with talks on action research and practitioner research by Richard Smith, Dario Banegas, Celia Antoniou and Marisol Guzman. Some of the presentations can be accessed via this link: [youtube.com/watch?v=nD2yAJiINjE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=nD2yAJiINjE).

### **The CAMELTA Research Group Conference**

In November 2020 ReSIG supported the CAMELTA Research Group Conference Online in Cameroon, which aimed to enhance bottom-up approaches to practice, policy, and teacher training in English Language and Literature Teaching. Eric Ekembe organized the event and I contributed with reflections from the Panel of discussants.

### *ReSIG Webinar: First event of The International Festival of Teacher-research in ELT 2021*

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2021 ReSIG held a webinar entitled ‘Enhancement mentoring for teacher-research: a hopeful response to Covid-19’ which was hosted by Richard Smith, Erzsébet Ágnes Békés, Mariana Serra & Seden Eraldemir Tuyan. A link to the recording is now available on our website at: [resig.weebly.com/webinar-enhancement-mentoring-for-teacher-research-a-hopeful-response-to-covid-19](http://resig.weebly.com/webinar-enhancement-mentoring-for-teacher-research-a-hopeful-response-to-covid-19).

This webinar is the first of many which ReSIG is supporting as part of an International Festival of Teacher Research in ELT 2021. Keep an eye on further news about the next events lined up!

### **ReSIG Publications**

In the past year ReSIG has produced several publications: *ELT Research (35)*, the ReSIG newsletter, which is available to members via our members’ area as well as on paper for members who opt for it, and books which are freely available on our website:

*Creating Quiet Reflective Spaces: Language Teacher Research as Professional Development*, edited by Loreto Aliaga Salas and Elena Ončevska Ager: [resig.weebly.com/books](http://resig.weebly.com/books).

*ELT Research in Action: Bringing together two communities of practice*, edited by Mackay, Birello & Xerri: [resig.weebly.com/publications](http://resig.weebly.com/publications).

In collaboration with the British Council, *Horizontes: ELT Teacher-research in Latin America*, edited by Darío Luis Banegas, Magdalena De Stefani, Paula Rebolledo, Carlos Rico Troncoso, and Richard Smith: [resig.weebly.com/books](http://resig.weebly.com/books).

## MA ELT Dissertation Quick Fire Presentation Event Online

ReSIG successfully held the MA Dissertation Quick Fire Presentation Event online on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2020. We had applicants from over 17 universities in the UK and the feedback was very positive. Recordings and pictures of the event can be accessed on our website at [resig.weebly.com/the-ma-elt-quick-fire-presentation-event-2020](http://resig.weebly.com/the-ma-elt-quick-fire-presentation-event-2020).

## Webinars

From July till October 2020 ReSIG supported a British Council China Webinar on teaching online in the current pandemic with a session on *Tips for Developing Engaging Online Pedagogic Tasks*, and held a webinar on 'The COVID-19 challenge and the teaching implications till now' both by Celia Antoniou. And Christina Nicole Giannikas talked about Conceptualising Practitioners' Online Research in the COVID-19 Era. Recordings and further details about the events can be found on our website at [resig.weebly.com/webinars](http://resig.weebly.com/webinars).

## Looking forward

We really look forward to the 2020-2021 IATEFL Conference and Pre-Conference Event which will be held next June in Harrogate, UK, to the International Festival of Teacher Research Online 2021, more of which will be announced in the year ahead, and plenty of more discussions in the field, events and publications in the pipeline.

For now I say goodbye with a reminder of the forthcoming PCE and ReSIG Day at the IATEFL Conference 2021.

## IATEFL ReSIG Pre-Conference Event

The PCE will focus on 'The role of Research in English Language Teaching and Teacher Education' and will feature poster presentations and panel discussions. It will be an interactive session and will be held on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June at 10.00-17.00 at the Crowne Plaza Harrogate. For further details and an updated schedule of the day, please visit our website at [resig.weebly.com/resig-pce-2021](http://resig.weebly.com/resig-pce-2021).

## ReSIG Showcase Day at the IATEFL Conference

The ReSIG Showcase Day at the IATEFL Conference will feature a fantastic array of talks, workshops and an open forum and will be held on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June at 10:30 – 18:00. To check the programme, please visit our website at [resig.weebly.com/resig-showcase-day-2020](http://resig.weebly.com/resig-showcase-day-2020).



*We look forward to seeing you!  
To a good 2021!*

Ana Inés Salvi  
Research SIG Coordinator



# Learning oriented assessment: Classroom activities in high-stakes test preparation classes

Ruijin Yang

Queensland University of Technology

## 1. Introduction

The development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in China has recently gone through major changes, and the globalised economy now positions English as a valuable asset. Therefore, EFL education and development in China is largely motivated by economic factors (Fan, 2015; Jin, 2017). To keep up with these educational changes and meet the vast demands of globalisation, the official commencement of a foreign language (mainly English) as a mandatory subject in compulsory education shifted from junior middle school level (Grade 7, 12 years old) to primary school level (Grade 3, 9 years old) in 2001 (Wang, 2007).

The context of this study is compulsory EFL testing in Chinese junior high schools: the Senior High School Entrance English Test (SHSEET). The test is designed to evaluate students' English proficiency required by the fifth level of the *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* (ECSCE), which aims to develop overall language use ability and communicative language use. According to the literature, high-stakes standardised English tests may impact significantly on corresponding teaching and learning practices, leading to either positive or negative washback effects. In this vein, the SHSEET, whose results are used as proof for senior high school admission, is perceived to exert tremendous influence. However, its influence on the achievement, or not, of the learner-centred goals stated in the curriculum remains largely unknown. This article focuses on three teachers' classroom observation data collected in a south-western city in China to reveal learning-oriented practices in test preparation classes. It explores the nature of interactive classroom activities in current test preparation courses, following the principles and theoretical framework of Learning Oriented Assessment (hereafter LOA) (Carless, 2007; Jones & Saville, 2016).

## 2. The senior high school entrance English test

The Senior High School Entrance Examination (SHSEE), which normally takes place in early June each year, is a large-scale standardised test battery taken by junior high school graduates (Grade 9, 15 years old) in China. Different subjects

including, but not limited to, Chinese, mathematics, and English are tested in the SHSEE. The nine-year compulsory schooling period requires students to study English for at least seven years and expects students' overall English ability to reach Level 5 as set in the ECSCE. In this sense, the SHSEET not only evaluates English learning during the compulsory education years but also assesses students' English language proficiency, which is high stakes in nature. Outcomes of the SHSEET are crucial for students, especially those who aim to pursue their studies in academic senior high schools. Therefore, the SHSEET is not only an achievement test, but it also has a gatekeeping function.

The SHSEET has a total score of 150 marks and is two hours long. Generally, knowledge and skills in the areas of grammar and vocabulary, listening, reading, speaking, and writing are tested in the test, which includes both selected-response and constructed-response formats. This paper focuses on the SHSEET because less attention has been paid to this test, and hence less attention paid to adolescent students' English study, compared to the university entrance exams.

### 3. Learning oriented assessment

Theoretically, LOA frameworks, which reflect the centrality of students, learning, and a positive direction, align with the assessment guidelines and the SHSEET design principles according to the ECSCE. Empirically, frameworks of LOA are ideal since they offer practical guidance for the preparation activities leading up to the test. LOA originates from Assessment for Learning (AFL) theory and aims to promote positive washback and place learning tasks at the centre, both inside and outside the classroom (Jones & Saville, 2016). It aims to strengthen learning processes and can be achieved through both formative and summative assessments (Carless, 2007).

Jones and Saville (2016) introduce the LOA cycle as an action theory aimed at bringing about positive washback by design. According to them, LOA sits in a much wider theory of social constructivism and views both effective learning and cognitive development in a social context. The key classroom elements include "interaction, observation, evaluation and feedback" (Jones & Saville, 2016: 13). Consequently, LOA micro cycle emphasise three major components of learning tasks, classroom interaction, and feedback at the centre of the classroom context. Moreover, the classroom activities in this LOA cycle mainly include *content-centred interactive activities*, which focus on linguistic forms, and *learner-centred interactive activities*, which emphasise higher-order skills. The current paper reports on the interactive practices in a selection of three Chinese junior high school classrooms. In total, three teachers' classrooms were observed, analysed, and reported on.

### 4. Research design

According to the literature on washback (e.g. Bailey, 1996), observing genuine classroom practices will help to clarify the phenomenon of test influence. To collect empirical evidence, 15 classroom sessions (each for 40 minutes) were observed from April to May in 2018 in three different junior high schools, before students

completed the SHSEE (from 12th to 14th June every year). One English teacher from each school was observed for five sessions (Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C). Further, to get the most from classroom observation data, the observations were audio-recorded and a self-designed observation protocol (see Appendix) was used to record and store observations in an organised manner. The recordings of classroom observations were then transcribed for the following thematic analysis. Through both inductive and deductive thematic analyses, relevant codes were generated using LOA theory as the reference. Co-coding was applied to ensure the reliability of the codes.

## 5. Results and discussion

As previously mentioned, the LOA cycle depicts two main types of interactive activities in classrooms. Although it is ideal that both interactive activities should appear in an LOA classroom, it is hard to see various higher-order skills or interactive activities in current SHSEET preparation courses. In general, the themes that emerged from this analysis were about various content-centred as well as learner-centred interactive activities that students and teachers had in test preparation classes. This section lists examples of interactive activities observed in the English classes.

Initially, two major types of classroom interactions were considered for classes to be learning-oriented (Jones & Saville, 2016). This idea guided the deductive analysis, but the actual classroom data guided the inductive analysis to present the full picture of classroom interactions. The first category was content-centred interactive activity, which mainly included *making sentences*, *giving bonus points*, *individual questioning*, *presenting homework*, *reading in chorus*, and *student-initiated Initiate-Response-Evaluate (IRE)*.

As the literature suggests and the current research defines, *content-centred interactive activity* focuses on mainly linguistic forms and test tasks (Jones & Saville, 2016). Findings suggest that among the three English teachers, Teacher A and Teacher C were mainly conducting content-centred interactive activities in their classroom teaching. However, Teacher B seldom used content-centred interactive activities in class. Examples of those activities are provided below.

### Example 1: Making sentences

*Teacher C: Now, please, I will ask you to use sentence structure to make a sentence by yourself. Imitate the sentence structure “be allowed to do something” to make a sentence. (Classroom Observation 14)*

### Example 2: Giving bonus points

*Teacher A: If you got the exact the same answer as the original text, you can get two points. And the other answer, if it is right, you can just get one. (CO3)*

### Example 3: Individual questioning

*Teacher A: This group, the same group? Okay, who said famous, who said famous? [pause] Number Two, Number Two, Charlotte?*

*Student (Charlotte): Show. (CO3)*

### Example 4: Presenting homework

*Teacher C: Show time. Show what? What will I show, do you think, do you know? Do you know what I will show? Can you guess? What I will show? Can you guess? Show time. What I will show? Can you guess? What I will show? (CO11)*

### Example 5: Reading in chorus

*Teacher A: Have a fever. Okay, go, have a fever, have a cold, go! (Teacher A asked students to read together.)*

*Students: Have a fever, have a cold; have a fever, have a cold; have a fever, have a cold. (CO5)*

### Example 6: Student-initiated IRE

*Student: What guide word?*

*Teacher C: What guide word? Some student asked you immediately, what guide word?*

*Student (Kate): Well, I mean conjunction.*

*Teacher A: She said conjunction, she answered you. (CO12)*

The second category was *learner-centred interactive activity*, which mainly covered two types of activities, namely, *group or pair discussion* and *asking students to demonstrate teaching*. Jones and Saville (2016) define learner-centred interactive activities as those that mainly aim to promote communication and higher-order



interaction. Findings from the observations suggest that all of these three teachers adopted group or pair discussion in their teaching. However, only Teacher C used the learner-centred interactive activity of asking students to demonstrate teaching in her classes. Examples are shown as below.

#### Example 7: Asking students to demonstrate teaching

*Teacher C: And I will ask some students to come here. I will check what you have read just, what you have read. Now, first one, who wants to have a try? Come here. And show what you have had, have you, what you have read. [pause] Now, Lily, please come here. [pause] And if, if you have any question, you can ask her. Okay? (CO14)*

#### Example 8: Group/pair discussion

*Teacher C: You can discuss in pairs, then tell me your answer. You can discuss with your partner, in pairs. Which one did you choose and, oh, which one will you choose and why? You can discuss in pairs. (CO13)*

The findings of this study suggest some qualitative evidence to support the claim by Jones and Saville (2016) that both interactive activity categories should be emphasised, since the complementarity between them is necessary for developing learning-oriented practices.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, the current study indicates that test preparation classes for the SHSEET, which is high-stakes in nature, have the potential for learning-oriented possibilities. The reason for this conclusion is that both content-centred and learner-centred interactive activities were identified in the classroom observation data. Therefore, the SHSEET test preparation classes did include learning-oriented activities which centred on both content and learners. As training students to be skilful test-takers may pose threats to their education and thinking (Hillocks, 2002), it is necessary to have both content-centred as well as learner-centred activities during a test preparation period. However, further learning-oriented practices such as feedback need to be investigated to explore a clearer LOA picture in this research context.

This study suggests numerous practical implications for teacher-researchers. Firstly, instead of “chalk and talk” or teacher-dominated teaching practices, it is suggested that teachers at any education level monitor their own classroom teaching by investigating and reflecting on their teaching activities, especially within classroom interactions. For test-related teaching and learning to be learning-oriented, teachers may wish to design both content-centred and learner-centred

interactive activities in their teaching. Furthermore, the study is an example of how everyday classroom teaching can be a good resource for teacher-researchers who wish to conduct research. For example, it is relatively straightforward to use a digital recorder to record classroom sessions and then apply thematic analysis or conversation analysis to the data to address the given research questions. By so doing, teacher-researchers may look into their own teaching and develop their research skills.

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## Biodata

Ruijin Yang ([ruijin.yang@hdr.qut.edu.au](mailto:ruijin.yang@hdr.qut.edu.au)) is a PhD candidate at Queensland University of Technology. Her PhD topic is about washback of a large-scale and high-stakes EFL test for adolescent learners in China. Her main research interests include language testing and assessment, TESOL, and mixed methods research.

**Appendix: Classroom observation scheme**

Date:

School:

Teacher:

Class number:

No. of students:

Time period:

**Part A: General teaching and learning practices regarding the GVT**

Major tasks/language points		
Time spent		
Mention of the SHSEET		
Assessment-related activities	Teaching	
	Learning	
Use of target language	L1	
	L2	
Materials	Types	
	Purposes	

**Part B: LOA related practice**

Assessment tasks		
Learning focus	Language	
	Test	
Participant organisation	T→Ss/Class	
	S→T/Class	
	Choral	
Feedback forms	Oral	
	Written	
	Only correction	
	Correction + explanation	
Result interpretation	Simple (only answer)	
	Advanced (referring to ECSCCE/test specification)	

**Part C: Field notes (nonverbal behaviours: facial expression, eye contact, etc.)**

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**Part D: Comments and questions**

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# Teacher perceived problems and solutions in ESL classrooms of tribal learners

**V. K. Karthika**

National Institute of Technology, Trichy, India

## 1. Introduction

This study describes the challenges encountered by teachers in the English classrooms of tribal residential schools in India and their approaches towards these problems. This minor study stems from the interactions I had with these teachers in a three-day 'capacity building' workshop I conducted for them in 2016. Three sessions were delivered on classroom management skills and effective teaching strategies to be adapted in large ESL classrooms. The workshop was intended to understand problems in the tribal children's classrooms and to identify their existing solutions practised by the teachers. Further, the workshop was oriented towards enriching the teachers' classroom management skills by offering possible, practical solutions. As the problems these teachers face are not unique to the particular context and the solutions they found can be of great pedagogic value to the teaching community, this study can resonate with similar English language teaching contexts.

## 2. A brief description of the context

The participants in this study were 32 teachers from tribal residential schools in the South Indian state Telangana. Tribal children from various districts of Telangana are encouraged to join these residential schools. The schools are part of a government scheme which aims at providing quality education to underprivileged tribal children.

The children in these schools are provided with free education and are also encouraged to develop their extra-curricular talents. They stay in the boarding school where teachers in charge take extra classes for their 'future learners' (a euphemistic term used to refer to the students who are weak in their studies). Most of the students are from extremely poor backgrounds and therefore once they go home, they have to work for wages with their parents. As informally reported by teachers and principals of such schools, some of these children do not come back to school. Some children do not adapt to the comparatively sophisticated atmosphere of the school and the boarding environment and they run away.

One of the major issues in educating the tribal children in India is the lack of interest of teachers to work in tribal areas which are rural and remote (John & Singh, 2014). Low self-esteem and lack of motivation of the children are two major factors that negatively affect teaching and learning (John & Singh, 2014). However, in the case of the society's schools, challenges in terms of teachers' willingness and efficacy are comparatively less (Kant et al., 2020).

### **3. The study**

#### **3.1. Research questions**

Designed as a qualitative study, the present study focussed on two questions:

What are the major challenges teachers encounter in their English classes?

How do they perceive these challenges and what strategies do they employ to solve the issues?

#### **3.2. Participants**

The participants in this study were 32 high school teachers (20 females and 12 males) aged between 28 and 45 years with teaching experience ranging from 2 years to 12 years. All of them had both a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in English and a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree. The medium of instruction was English and the students were 12 to 13 years old.

#### **3.3. Data collection**

A background discussion was carried out with the 32 participants to ensure their willingness to participate in this study and to obtain permission to use the data they provided. The discussion also provided insight into the nature of questions to be prompted for the focus group discussions. The teachers formed three groups; groups A, B and C with 11, 11 and 10 teachers respectively. Data for this study were obtained through two focus group discussions based on two themes: identifying the challenges encountered by these teachers and locating the strategies these teachers adopt to resolve the issues. Based on the focus groups' responses and their analysis, a questionnaire with descriptive items was designed and administered to teachers of tribal schools from two other South Indian states where the learning-teaching contexts were similar. Important episodes from the audio-recorded Focus Group Discussions were transcribed. Problems were thematically classified and solutions were identified.

### **4. Findings**

#### **4.1. Analysis of focus group discussion to identify challenges in classrooms**

Features emerging from the focus group discussions were categorised into problems related to classroom management, problems affecting classroom teaching and problems related to affective factors. Problems related to classroom management included lack of discipline in the class and lack of learner attention. A

teacher's statement succinctly summed up one of the issues all teachers encountered in their classrooms. She stated that "the classes are always noisy and I have to shout and at the end of the class I feel exhausted. Any attempt to make them quiet will result in more noise"( Teacher 15)

The first and third focus groups articulated something similar about learners asking for permission "to go out, to sleep, to use toilet, go back to their rooms and bringing books which they have hidden somewhere in classroom itself. To make it worse, they do not pay attention at all. They always try doing something or other and get everyone's attention diverted" (Teacher 26)

Lack of discipline and lack of learner attention were two issues on which the teachers agreed. Problems affecting teaching were greater in number compared to the other categories. The following were identified by 30 teachers who stated that their students are "not even interested in project work" (Teacher 23). Teacher two stated that the learners do not do the homework and the teacher had "to spend time in the classroom for this owing to which other students will be making noise and engaging in other things making the class a very embarrassing place"( Teacher 2)

Teachers from the other two focus groups also voiced similar opinions about homework. All teachers in all groups expressed the difficulty in teaching a heterogeneous class in which "learners are very dissimilar and their proficiency in English and cleverness in other subjects and all their academic strengths are very different" (Teacher 17)

Low learner motivation was another challenge that all teachers encountered. One teacher posited his opinion about his learners:

*"my students don't know why they need education. They think of the freedom they get back in their homes. They are free and nobody cares for them. No food, fine. No sleep, fine. Here they get good food and shelter but they don't want to be here. They don't want to learn. They don't know the importance of education. Don't like to do project. Don't like to learn lessons. No interest at all". (Teacher 13)*

"Mother tongue influence" was one phrase raised by all the teachers. They believed that the learners are not able to learn English because their mother tongue is very strong. However, the teachers also mentioned that

*"English only motto will not work. These learners don't know the alphabets, then what do they understand if I teach them in English. Sometimes, I give instructions in Telugu. It is not allowed. But they should understand, right?" (Teacher 24)*

Another teacher mentioned that the learners "always nod their heads saying they understood the feedback I give but they don't understand anything. They just nod and go and repeat the mistake". (Teacher 16)

Twenty-nine teachers stated that most of their students are “homesick as they are away from their parents and from the comfort zone” (Teacher 19). The teachers were of the opinion that the students seem sad and depressed and that affected the classroom dynamics negatively. These being the major challenges the teachers encounter in classrooms which impede effective teaching, they were asked to think of the ways in which they usually address these issues, in the second round of the focus group discussion.

#### 4.2. Analysis of focus group discussion to identify solutions

The teachers described a number of strategies they had used to address these issues, with varying degrees of success. They stated that,

*“we are always buried by responsibilities. The ‘portions’ [segments from the syllabus to be completed before each examination] are not ‘covered’ [completed]. Management is monitoring us. Family is there. My own children are there. These children are moody and not interested. So most of the time we all are tired and we try to finish the syllabus somehow. May be by taking extra classes and all”. (Teacher 17)*

They indicated that they were unable to control the noisy classrooms most of the time. “By practice we survive in the class. Some students listen. Some no way. We have to continue” (Teacher 26). Four teachers mentioned that they make the most “troublesome learners the class leaders for a month. Something like giving the house key to a thief, an old saying” (Teacher 8). The teachers stated that if the students do not do homework, they largely have to ignore it. Some of them stated that they will “call them to the teachers’ room and ask them to stand there and do it” (Teacher 7).

When they have to deal with “mixed ability” learners, they group the students separately and co-teach them (Teachers 2,5 and 19). This means two teachers go to the class at the same time and teach the children. They justified their strategy by pointing out the need to pay individual attention to each student. A teacher reported that she uses an “appreciation tree” which she made of thermocol. She said that when a student behaves very well she writes his name on the leaf of the thermocol tree. She said that seeing this, others eventually want their names to be there and thus they behave appropriately in the classroom (Teacher 12). Another teacher said that she asks other students to clap for the student who behaves well in the classroom. In this way, she said that she motivates her students (Teacher 32). Teachers unanimously agreed that the English only dictum cannot work in their context.

They argued that a judicious use of the learners’ mother tongue is necessary in the classroom. A humane strategy, which was found interesting was “allowing a student who is sad and depressed to go back to his or her room and sleep” (Teacher 6).

Many of them stated that they use videos on their phones or bring laptops to stir the learners' interest. They bring in printed cartoons and allow students to make stories based on them. Still, the teachers concluded that these are solutions that help them to "survive the classroom disasters" (Teacher 4).

The challenges faced by the teachers and various solutions many of them adopted, as evident from their responses in the focus group discussions, are summed up below.

Problems identified	Practical solutions
P1. Lack of discipline of learners	S1. Making the most 'troublesome' learner class leader for a month, ignoring the noise
P2. Learners not doing homework	S2. Calling students to teachers' room and making them do the task there. Ignoring it.
P3. Mixed ability students (heterogeneous learners)	S3. Grouping students, co-teaching
P4. Lower learner motivation	S4. Appreciation tree, clapping for good performance, encouraging healthy competition
P5. English medium instruction	S5. Using mother tongue when it is absolutely necessary
P6. Learners with homesickness	S6. Allowing learners to go back to their rooms and sleep, giving them company
P7. Textbooks, learner boredom	S7. Adapt materials, bring videos and cartoons to class
P8. Learners' inclination towards project work at the cost of text book learning	S8. ....
P9. Learners not implementing feedback/error corrections	S9. Repeated instruction
P10. Lack of learner attention	S10. Prompting questions at regular intervals

**Table 1. Problems and solutions**

From the interactions with the participants of this study, it is understood that they look forward to such professional development platforms where they "meet different teachers with similar or different classroom experiences in teaching, which would be great input...to groom professionally". (Teacher 30)

## 5. Conclusions

The participants in the study largely based their philosophy of teaching on "being humane rather than being an affirmative teacher who believes in rules" (in a personal conversation with one of the participants). Most of the teachers were empathetic and they stated that they understood their learners' emotional conditions. Within all the limitations imposed by the syllabus constraints, time constraints and threat of the examination schedule, these teachers were able to help their learners as much as they could, re-assuring the humane aspects of teaching.



These teachers' approach to a monolingual classroom, though a little confused owing to the lack of training in some aspects of language teaching, was of specific interest to me. The schools encourage learners and teachers to communicate in English and only in English with the justification that teachers' interaction with the learners is the sole exposure these learners get. However, at the cost of comprehension, when this English-only dictum is implemented, it demotivates the learners from discussing creative ideas they may have. Capability in the mother tongue can be tapped and these teachers should be given training on how to make the language classroom a 'languages classroom'.

Issues encountered by teachers of tribal residential schools in South India may be common. However, their approaches to these problems and the outlook towards teaching these underprivileged children may differ greatly. In the schools of Telangana, the teachers are more sensitive towards the emotional as well as academic needs of the learners. Their awareness of the critical conditions a learner goes through inside and beyond the classroom as well as their empathetic and humane teaching philosophy equip them with strategies to adapt in classrooms. This awareness is generated and enriched through various in-service teacher-training programmes, where interactions with experts and peers enable them to think about problems and possibilities. Such knowledge sharing platforms are not available to the teachers who are from the other two states mentioned in this study. Comprehending the academic and emotional needs of the tribal learners is imperative in constructing a classroom pedagogy that is equally sensible and sensitive.

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## Biodata

Karthika V.K. is an Assistant Professor in National Institute of Technology, Trichy in India. After her Master's in TESOL Studies from the University of Leeds, she did her Ph.D. from the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. She has been teaching English for seven years. Email her at [vkkarthika@nitt.edu](mailto:vkkarthika@nitt.edu).

# Integrating grammar and writing: Teachers' reflections on the potential for student empowerment

**Dr Christine Xavier**

National Institute of Education (NIE), Nanyang  
Technological University, Singapore

## 1. Introduction

This article shares some of the reflections of a team of five in-service teachers from a Singapore primary school on the potential impact of an action research (AR) project on 11-year-old students in Primary Five (P5). The AR project involved integrating grammar as a resource for making meaning and writing in the English Language (EL) classroom. The EL departments in primary schools in Singapore usually develop their own Instructional Materials (IMs) as teaching guides to teach writing. This team of teachers wished to revise their existing P5 writing IMs by embedding explicit and contextualised grammar components within them. Their main concern was that while their students seemed to perform reasonably well during grammar lessons and in grammar tasks done in isolation, they struggled with the effective use of grammar within a writing task. They hence recognised “gaps between what [was] actually happening in [their] teaching situation and what [they] would ideally like to see happening” (Burns, 2010, p. 2), spurring them to engage in an AR project. They later reflected that the process of the AR project has the potential to empower students to make purposeful and appropriate grammatical choices in expressing content and meaning in writing.

## 2. Grammar and writing

Myhill et al. (2012) argue that teaching grammar in isolation, such as the parsing of sentences, and then teaching writing separately, is unlikely to improve writing as there is a lack of integration between the two. In 2012, Myhill and her team (reported in e.g., Jones et al., 2013) conducted a large-scale study which investigated the impact of contextualised grammar teaching on students' writing performance. The results of their study suggest that explicit, contextualised grammar instruction in the context of writing lessons does positively impact students' writing development when grammar is meaningfully linked to writing demands. Hence, they stress that “the value of grammar is where the grammar point is taught in the

context of writing, either in the context of the linguistic demands of a particular genre, or the writing needs of a particular child” (p. 30).

Such an integrated approach to teaching grammar and writing adopts a descriptive view of grammar, where relations between grammatical choices and the meanings they construct are established. This view sees grammar as choice, as a meaning-making resource. This contrasts with the prescriptive view of grammar, where accuracy of grammatical structures is the emphasis. The prescriptive view of grammar is usually adopted when grammar teaching is done in isolation. So, while the descriptive view of grammar emphasizes grammar as choice, the prescriptive view of grammar emphasizes grammar as structure. Carter and McCarthy stress that “the grammar of choice is as important as the grammar of structure” (2006: 7).

In Singapore, where the medium of instruction is the English Language, one of the guiding principles of the Ministry of Education’s (MOE) EL syllabuses (2010 and 2020) is to recognise “language as a means of making meaning” (Tan, 2016, p. 9). It is also explicitly stated in the syllabuses that students will need to “learn the grammar of the language in the contexts of the various types of texts” (Tan, 2016, p. 10). While the syllabuses seem to advocate the teaching and learning of grammar in the context of texts, with the view of language as meaning-making, in my teacher training work, I have found that most Singapore primary schools still adopt the practice of teaching grammar and writing in silos during different lesson periods. This results in the lack of explicit links being made between the role of grammar as a meaning-making resource, and writing.

### 3. The action research project

Inspired by Myhill et al. (2012)’s suggestion that “a writing curriculum which draws attention to the grammar of writing in an embedded and purposeful way ... is a more positive way forward” (p.30), the project team planned to revise a specific writing unit within the school’s existing writing IMs to embed explicit, contextualised grammar components with the view of grammar as a meaning-making resource for writing. The focus was to introduce to students “a repertoire of infinite possibilities” (Myhill et al., 2012: 30) in the use of different grammatical structures to create different meanings in texts.

#### 3.1. Context

This school has a range of low, middle to high progress students. The two P5 classes selected to participate in this project were two middle-progress classes of 39 students each. Thematic units, for example, on ‘sportsmanship’ and ‘friendship’, are used in EL lessons to teach grammar, vocabulary, comprehension as well as listening, reading, speaking and writing skills, largely during different periods (each thematic unit is taught over 30 periods of 30 minutes each). The teaching of writing is done last to wrap up the unit, and here, teachers usually use the writing IMs which comprise teaching slides and activities as teaching guides. The final task is for students to write a composition based on the theme. At P5, students usually write

narratives or personal recounts. Teachers then mark students' compositions and provide feedback for improvement.

### 3.2. Methodology

The AR project team comprised the five teachers and the author of this paper, who is an EL academic specialising in pedagogical grammar, from the local, national institute of teacher education. First, the teachers attended four 3-hour professional development (PD) sessions on grammar led by the EL academic. The PD sessions involved a review of grammar content both as structure and choice, specifically discussing how grammar can function as a meaning-making resource in writing. For this project, the team decided to focus on the grammatical structures of noun phrases, sentences and adverbials. The PD sessions also guided the teachers in how to conduct accurate and detailed grammatical analyses of the identified grammatical structures in students' compositions. They were going to use this skill in the following step of the AR project: teacher inquiry into students' writing.

After the PD sessions, the teachers engaged in teacher inquiry, analysing some P5 student compositions to better understand how their students used the grammatical structures in writing. Based on a writing unit on the theme of sportsmanship from the existing P5 writing IMs, the EL teachers of the two target classes taught the unit to their classes. The students then completed the required writing task of writing a narrative on an act of sportsmanship in class. Twenty random compositions from each class were then collected from students who had consented to the use of their compositions for this project. These compositions were then anonymised and handed over to the team as data for grammatical analysis.

Teacher inquiry afforded greater understanding of the areas in which the students lacked the awareness and knowledge in using these grammatical structures in writing to better express content and meaning. For example, the structure of a noun phrase comprises pre-modifiers, the head noun, and post-modifiers. Analyses of the noun phrases in the compositions revealed that the students predominantly wrote noun phrases with only pre-modifiers (e.g. the excited girl – det + adjective + head noun). However, with the use of post-modifiers like prepositional phrases and relative clauses, more information about the head noun could be communicated. For example, using a relative clause who was cheering loudly would expand the given example to the excited girl who was cheering loudly. This finding led to the decision to include grammar content knowledge and teaching strategies on the use of noun post-modifiers in the revision of the writing IMs. With this deeper understanding of not only the use of noun phrases, but sentence structures and adverbials in students' writing, the team discussed how the existing writing IMs could be enhanced to create more awareness and understanding of these grammatical structures such that students can make grammatical choices to express meaning in writing. The team then set out to revise the next writing unit on the theme of friendship in the writing IMs. In this way, revision of the writing IMs was driven by the actual needs of the students. Finally, once the revision was done, the five teachers in the team wrote reflections on their AR project experience.

#### 4. Teachers' reflections on potential student empowerment through the AR project

The teachers (Mira, Faith, Anna, Tania and Gary - names are pseudonyms) reflected that the process of the AR project greatly improved their grammar knowledge and teaching practices, and in turn, has the potential to empower students by increasing students' awareness and understanding of the use of grammatical structures to express meaning and content in writing. In terms of the AR project enhancing their grammar knowledge, Mira reflected: 'Not only did the project help me and my team to understand students' language ability and knowledge better, but it also strengthened our grammatical knowledge, empowering us to address the gaps and help students level up'.

In addition to enhancing their grammar knowledge, the teachers also reflected that the AR project improved their teaching practices. Faith shared that the AR project "has motivated [her] to focus on the teaching of grammar in writing" and that it is "important to let the students know the place of grammar in writing. Grammar is not just about tenses and different verb forms; it affects the storyline". Faith's realisation that grammar "affects the storyline" highlights that she, as a teacher, had previously mainly adopted the view of grammar as being prescriptive, with a focus on structure, and this had influenced her teaching practices. This project has heightened her awareness that the choice of grammatical structures, for example, whether to expand a noun phrase or not, plays a part in expressing content and meaning in writing. Anna also reflected that she "always thought writing is something that could not be 'taught'... that it was a style and one had to have a flair for it". However, now she believes that "there is a certain method of showing students how they can vary their writing using different grammatical ...structures".

By enhancing the teachers' grammar knowledge and teaching practices, the teachers reflected that the AR project has the potential, in turn, to empower students to make grammatical choices in expressing content and meaning in writing. The clear realization that "[p]upils who struggle with writing need to have extremely clear [grammatical] structures to support and guide them" (Tania) may not have come about if not for the AR project.

The following are some of the teachers' reflections highlighting this potential student empowerment in the use of grammar as a meaning-making resource in writing, as a result of the impact of the AR project on teachers:

*When the team sat together and analysed the compositions, the discussion process was very insightful as we drew patterns and saw common gaps in our students' writing. I believe that students CAN and are able to vary their writing through the understanding of grammatical structures as long as they are made aware of the different ways. (Anna)*

*Making students aware and giving them tools is very important.... I hope we have helped our students in some way [through the revision of the IMs]. This time, I am certain that the students will be able to*

*write better stories because they would be conscious about the role that grammar plays in their writing. (Faith)*

*This to me is a 'revolution' to the teaching of grammar. With this approach, students would be able to see for themselves how their knowledge of form and function of some of the grammar items could be consciously, conscientiously and explicitly used in writing to improve their language in writing. (Gary)*

## 5. Conclusion

The teachers' reflections highlight that the AR project not only benefited them, but also potentially their students. This project positively impacted the teachers in terms of their increased awareness of the importance of integrating the teaching of grammar as a meaning-making resource in writing. With this increased awareness, and their enhanced grammar knowledge and teaching practices, students in turn, may be propelled to view grammar as choice and make purposeful and appropriate grammatical choices in expressing various meanings in their writing.

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## Biodata

Dr Christine Xavier is a Lecturer at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She mainly teaches on the Pedagogical Grammar courses at the NIE. Her research focuses on the intersections between theory and practice in the areas of pedagogical grammar and English language variation and use.

# Mentoring English language teachers to use action research in teaching writing

Silvia Severino and Mariana Serra

## 1. Introduction

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) offers a plethora of possibilities for intellectually curious teachers who are on the lookout for new resources and opportunities for growth that can contribute to improving their practices in the classroom. The conference Teachers Research! held in Chile in 2016 allowed us to meet for the first time and realize that we were working in similar teaching contexts: one of us in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, and the other one in Rojas, a rural city in the province of Buenos Aires. Therefore, on returning to Argentina, we started to design a mentoring programme to help secondary school teachers implement action research (AR) in their classrooms.

## 2. Mentoring teachers to do teacher-research

The subject matter of this AR project arose from the compulsory public school meetings each of us attended in our cities, during which most teachers of English complained about the bad scores for the writing assignments their secondary state school learners got. We both took the opportunity to comment on AR and our intention to mentor colleagues in order to empower them so that they could help students overcome their weaknesses related to certain aspects of L2 learning. A group of teachers showed interest in our proposal. Fortunately, four of those teachers accepted our invitation and became our mentees (two in Rojas and two in Buenos Aires).

Our mentoring process began with our first scheduled virtual meeting soon after that school encounter. Mentees answered a questionnaire to let us know about their experience of AR and their expectations related to this study. Some of them mentioned they had some previous knowledge about the approach and that professional development was their main reason for taking part in this project. After completing the survey, we asked mentees about the problematic situations they had identified in their classrooms. They were also required to keep journals for our data collection purposes. All our meetings were recorded as well.

As regards our roles, we would be collaborators and distance learning (DL) mentors cooperating and providing meaningful support during our face-to-face meetings and virtual encounters once or twice a month, which had the objective of

making mentees gain confidence to conduct research to solve their real site-based problems in their classrooms. They became aware of the importance of AR and of the fact that every teacher involved "becomes an 'investigator' or 'explorer' of his or her personal teaching context, while at the same time being one of the participants in it" (Burns, 2010:2). This kind of investigation harks back to the renowned model put forward by Kemmis and McTaggart (as cited in Burns, 2010) which encapsulates the four main phases of AR: plan, action, observation and reflection and may be applied to the necessities of any particular course.

By taking inspiration from that model, we designed our own framework for mentoring purposes, which we implemented during our mentoring sessions. It consisted of four stages, which were virtually viable: listening, questioning, helping mentees reflect and raise awareness, and encouraging. First, we listened attentively to our mentees' concern about their classes. Then, by asking them guiding questions, we helped mentees to self-reflect upon that problematic situation in their teaching practices, so that they became aware of the need for change or improvement. Finally, we encouraged them to try the course of action they felt was more suitable to their own teaching contexts. As a result, the mentees collaboratively decided to act upon their concern in the same way, and we assured them we would be at their disposal to offer any help they might need.

### 3. Paving the way for AR

With the purpose of framing our mentees' thinking and making them realize that they would be able to carry out AR in their classrooms, in our first virtual encounter we proposed that they conducted an easy experiment from Parrott (1996) called Red Ink for two weeks. The purpose was that with this 'exercise' mentees discovered their students' reactions when they used red ink for correction given that that colour is associated with rude and threatening connotations. Therefore, in the following virtual meeting mentees described their students' reactions after they had used red ink for correction.

Surprisingly and contrary to common belief, Mr. Parrott's students liked red because it was much easier to find their teacher's corrections. In the case of our mentees, they obtained similar results as one of them shared with us this comment:

*I remember when I was at secondary school my teachers checked homework using red ink and I didn't like it, so now I use different colourful pens. However, what I did with one of my courses was to check their exercises with a black pen for a week. Some of my students, the girls especially, gave me a colourful pen immediately I checked the first part of their exercises. One of girls said to me "No teacher con una de color mejor, es más linda" ["No, teacher. A coloured pen is better, it's prettier"].*

This simple experience gave mentees confidence and enthusiasm to investigate their own classroom contexts.



#### 4. Research study implemented by mentees in their classrooms

In the following virtual encounter mentees discussed the writing weaknesses of their students and agreed on designing and implementing together an AR project which each of them would carry out in a course of their own. Due to time constraints, they decided they would take samples of only five learners in each of those courses which they thoroughly inspected for the purpose of this study. It is important to point out that the level of the students was A2 according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference).

The project consisted of three stages: before (March), during (April and May) and after (June to November) the implementation of the plan of action. During those stages, the learners were given a questionnaire to explore their ideas about writing and their reactions to the teacher's feedback.

During the before stage, each learner designed a sales leaflet for a mobile phone individually which was marked later by each mentee according to a set of descriptors. Throughout the during stage, learners worked in class and at home writing and rewriting sales leaflets and completing individual journals, till obtaining the final versions of the leaflets which were shared with students from other classes for them to read and write comments. In the after stage, each learner was asked to design a sales leaflet individually at home and to hand it in. Those leaflets were checked by the mentees who gave a mark using the same set of descriptors implemented at the beginning of their study.

As described above, mentees used several data gathering tools during their AR study: pre-, while- and post- writing samples of different tasks, journal writing and a questionnaire.

##### 4.1. Mentors' roles

We constructed our roles as mentors considering the needs we identified when we implemented our previous individual projects as teacher researchers. Tonna, Bjerkholt and Holland (2017: 211) have offered several interesting definitions about those roles, as follows:

The role of the mentor is to provide support, and a key purpose of feedback is to stimulate the mentee's reflection on practice (Lai Ha, 2014; Schön, 1987). It is thus necessary for the mentor to be methodical and bring about critical reflection on practice (Harrison et al., 2005) and to encourage self-direction, creativity, autonomy and praxis within her/his mentees (Galbraith, 2003). The mentor can enable reflective practice through astute questioning and particularly probing questions that allow the mentee to deconstruct and reconstruct pedagogical practices (Bjerkholt et al., 2014; Harrison et al., 2005). Through such approaches, the mentor can give rise to effective practices and help mentees evaluate existing practices in schools.

We believed that empowering mentees to feel confident enough to solve the problematic situations in their classrooms would trigger further exploration of future challenges, with the goal of improving their teaching practices and of enhancing their knowledge.

#### 4.2. Data collection by mentors

Several data gathering tools were used, as follows:

- Questionnaires given to mentees at the beginning and at the end of this study,
- On-line journals where the mentees wrote about their experiences (e.g. the one about Red Ink previously mentioned), impressions, reflections and reported their progress throughout the project,
- Recorded video conferencing: virtual meetings held once or twice a month, which were carried out in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, where we as mentors could facilitate the development of the steps previously described.
- Mentors' journals, where we registered comments obtained in face-to-face and virtual encounters and later shared during our mentors' meetings to co-construct further steps of action.

#### 5. Results

The great challenge of becoming mentors implied playing several roles, such as to 'provide emotional support and guidance to the mentees who are novices and in need of just such support. From these roles certain relationships accrue such as nurturing relationship based on mutual trust and a sense of respect for the mentee' (Halai, 2006:702).

During the implementation of this study, we became attentive listeners and felt that we had started to develop the mentoring skills mentioned by Eraldemir Tuyan (2017: 48) as regards 'eliciting, scaffolding, and giving supportive feedback.' Therefore, an interesting debate took place when a mentee expressed her doubts about the effectiveness of using a set of fixed descriptors suggested for marking students' writing assignments which in her opinion seemed 'impractical, time-consuming and somewhat unclear for students'. Such a situation and others allowed us, as mentors, to help them reach consensus after showing different perspectives from our subject-specialists' view.

There were several instances like the one described above which, undoubtedly, let us build up genuine relationships with our mentees, become reengaged professionally and practise our mentoring skills in order to become more effective mentors.

#### 6. Conclusion

This being our first time as DL trainers, it is important to highlight that the informal mentoring relationship we created was based entirely on our curiosity and will to gain knowledge and help others. We created a mentee-centered environment and developed a participant-support structure reassuring our mentees that support, reinforcement and assessment were readily available. In our role as e-learning facilitators-as-instructors we designed interaction that maximized collaboration between mentees by providing feedback to them on the results of their collaboration. Supporting our DL mentees was work-intensive but a key factor to

maintain a high level of motivation among them, taking into account the few hours they had available to spend on professional development.

Mentoring the four teachers was highly rewarding. If we had the occasion to mentor other colleagues, we would look forward to improving our face-to-face encounters and our e-learning facilitator skills. We are well aware that the focus on their specific concerns and needs will help them overcome difficulties, gain self-confidence as potential researchers and make AR a more common practice.

The impact of this mentoring experience on us has undoubtedly promoted our professional development, challenged our creativity and given us key insights into the practical aspects of the collaborative teaching and learning process. We hope that colleagues all over the world who read this project feel inspired to adapt or adopt it in their own particular and unique contexts.

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## Biodata

Silvia Severino is an EFL teacher in state-run schools in Buenos Aires, a coordinator in APIBA LitSIG and one of the winners of Aptis for Teachers AR Awards (British Council) in 2014 and in 2016/2017. She graduated from ISPJVG, holds a UTN Licenciada degree and a master's degree from UNEATLANTICO. Email: [silseverino@gmail.com](mailto:silseverino@gmail.com).

Mariana Serra is an EFL teacher and a licentiate in English (UNL), founder member of APIBA TRResearch SIG attending an MA Program in Applied Linguistics. She was one of the winners of Aptis for Teachers Action Research Awards (British Council) in 2014 and in 2016/2017. Moderator during EVO Classroom-based research 2018/19 sessions and lead-moderator in 2020. Email: [marianaserra2@gmail.com](mailto:marianaserra2@gmail.com).

# Developing teacher identity and influencing practice through research

**Cherise Shi Ling Teo**

National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore

## 1. Introduction

Studies have demonstrated the importance of research in developing professional teacher identities. For example, Dikilitaş and Yaylı (2018, p. 421) who examined the self-reported engagement of teachers after doing Action Research posited that “Research leads teachers to think beyond teaching content, towards considering learner problems, and their own professional development in a wider sense.” They also added that self-reflection and agency are important in developing identity. This implies that the incorporation of the reflection process during research is beneficial for teacher’s professional and identity development. In defining reflection, Jay and Johnson (2002, p. 76) proposed that it is both an individual and collaborative process where the insights gained can be evaluated against the three criteria of “(1) additional perspectives, (2) one’s own values, experiences, and beliefs, and (3) the larger context within which the questions are raised”. This paper seeks to demonstrate that discussions among pre-service teachers during the conceptual research process are also a valuable platform for (collaborative) reflection of teacher identities that influence practice.

## 2. Context and participants

Being ethnically diverse, Singapore has four official languages – English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil. English is Singapore’s working language and since 1983, all schools are English-medium with English taught as first language. With the rich diversity of language varieties that come into contact with English, a local colloquial variety, Singlish, emerged. Singlish is often perceived as “broken English” and derided as a marker of a lack of education and/or lower socioeconomic status (Kramer-Dahl, 2003). Although there has been a gradual acceptance of Singlish as a marker of Singaporean identity over the years, the continued presence of the public campaign, Speak Good English Movement (SGEM), is a reminder to citizens that Singlish is undesirable. Set up in 2000 by ex-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, it has had taglines like “Speak well. Be understood.” and “Be understood. Not only in Singapore, Malaysia and Batam.” (SGEM, 2020).

Against this context, one critical issue I encountered in teacher education is the (identity) labels of native speaker (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS). When I first embarked on a small-scale research project in 2017, my focus was on improving quality of collaborative talk by pre-service teachers. The issue of NS and NNS identities that emerged from the data collected was unexpected, because the participants are educated in English-medium schools and have entered into EL teacher training as post-graduates; and yet, some perceive themselves as NNSs. Since then, through informal conversations with other Singaporean bilingual pre-service teachers in my other classes, I often find those who identify as NNSs holding the belief that they are less capable and qualified to teach EL regardless of their actual language ability. This prompted me to re-examine my data with the following research questions:

- What role does identity play in EL teacher education? How does increased awareness of identity benefit professional development?
- How can discussions of research be improved to better aid reflection of identity?

### 3. Methodology

Discussion data were collected from an assignment that pre-service EL teachers had to complete for a three-month bridging course where I was one of the tutors. The course ran from November, 2017 to January, 2018 before their first semester to address gaps in content knowledge in the areas of linguistics and applied linguistics. The assignment required the pre-service teachers to work in groups of four to five members to conduct conceptual research in an area of interest (e.g., language acquisition, multiliteracies, critical pedagogy, etc.) and present their findings. This fairly independent process involved the following stages:

- Group determines research topic
- Search for and read up on relevant research papers individually
- Group discussions
- Consultation with tutor
- Further reading and group discussions
- Presentation of findings

Each group of pre-service teachers who participated in the project was provided with an audio recorder and asked to record one of their discussions after their consultation with their tutor. The negation of the need for a researcher to be present is to ensure a discussion that is as natural as possible.

A total of nine recordings with 12 hours of data were collected, transcribed, and anonymized. As the original focus of the data was not on NS/NNS identities, there were a diversity of discussion topics due to the wide-ranging research areas. Nevertheless, three groups touched on NS identity issues in their discussions. However, as the discussions were unguided, only one group reflected on their

identities with sufficient depth to influence their practice. The other two groups' discussions remained on an academic level.

For the purpose of this paper, the discussion data presented are drawn from the one recording that shows how engagement with research can bring about identity development and reflective practice using Jay and Johnson's (2002) three criteria. The four group members, Adam, Brenda, Clara, and Dan recorded their 96-minute discussion of their research into English as an international language and English in Singapore's education landscape in January 2018. To improve readability and understanding, the excerpts will not include micro-features and the additional transcription notations (other than the usual punctuation) are as follows:

**Underline** : word is stressed

**= : latched utterance**; no interval between utterances

4. Results and discussion

In this section, the data have been grouped following Jay and Johnson's three criteria (see Introduction).

4.1. Additional Perspectives

In the course of the group's research, they came across several studies that discussed who a NS is and preferences for or against NS and NNS as EL teachers in different countries where English is not the first language. This sharing of the studies that they have read makes up the "additional perspectives" criteria. I would also argue that in sharing and defending their differing values, experiences, and beliefs, they were also provided with additional perspectives. For example, while clarifying their understanding of the term 'native', the group did a poll on whether they personally see themselves as NS. While both Adam and Clara identified themselves as NNSs, Dan identified as NNS and the three of them defended their identities as shown in the following excerpt.

Adam:	Because I was born with it. You know, I received the pronunciation when I was young.
Dan:	I would say that I'm not because my experiences overseas taught me that my English is not that well understood. So, I might be a native speaker of Singapore English? A mix of the colloquial and standard type but I won't say that I'm a native speaker so, like for example, if a country is asking for native speakers of English to teach English? I will not think I'm qualified for that.
Adam:	Yah. In the same context about not understanding pronunciations, [this] works even for UK and Americans. They come here [and] we don't understand them sometimes. And they don't understand us. But just because we don't understand, doesn't mean we're not native.
Clara:	Doesn't mean English being used is wrong.

This excerpt shows that their debate of NS/NNS identities revolves around the idea of being understood. Although all members agreed that Singaporeans are NS (based on their findings of NS definitions like EL as first language), Dan still felt

otherwise on a personal level. As shown in the excerpt, he was purely focused on being understood by others. It was Adam’s and Clara’s challenge of that perspective by saying that foreigners may not be understood as well that had all of them discussing further why Dan identified as a NNS. This close examination of their different beliefs and experiences in relation to research findings broadened their perspectives and provided a platform for theoretical application.

4.2. One’s own Values, Experiences, and Beliefs

One of the key experiences that emerged from their differing perspectives is the role that SGEM played in shaping Dan’s beliefs and experiences.

Dan:	As in, I think my way of thinking is a by-product of our government’s movement because, you know, they are saying that you need to be understood. Your English needs to be understood. So because of that message, that’s subliminal, for the programming?
Adam:	I see. SGEM.
Dan:	Yah. So=
Clara:	=Change your life!
Dan:	So yah. While I’m very aware of it, there’s also part of me that’s like, you know, I don’t think I can call myself a native speaker if I’m not understood.

Due to SGEM’s rhetoric over the years, Dan acknowledged that he perceives being understood through speaking “Standard English” as a critical definition of being a NS. Encountering Adam’s and Clara’s challenge of why being understood should be a unidirectional effort (on top of the various academic definitions during this research) has led Dan to realise how he came to hold a NNS identity and to struggle with it. Additionally, Clara’s comment of “Change your life!” is very telling of the influence that a belief has on one’s perception of experiences in life.

4.3. Professional Practice in the Larger Context

With the increased awareness of SGEM’s influence on Singaporeans’ language ideologies, the discussion turned towards their role and agency as EL teachers. Due to Dan’s personal experiences and struggles with SGEM and his identity, he has the following insight for EL teachers in general (note the change in first person singular to first person plural in **bold**).

Dan:	While the students would view it as broken English, they might like using Singlish? But in the classroom they’re very negative. They’re like, “No, it’s broken English. It will cost us our jobs.” It echoes exactly what SGEM is trying to say. So, you know, it brings me to the point, and because my own experiences, I’m very affected by the SGEM thing? Even though I’m very aware of it? Yah. So to help our students as in what their view of Singlish in a classroom? Is it really their own views? Or is it, you know, the influence of the top-down approach. Yah, because I think it’s a waste? Because of some bias in our policies that we force our students to close off possibilities. Singlish might be a good tool for them to actually master the standard
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[English] better but because of their own bias that they're not aware of so maybe we can bring that in as well if possible.
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This excerpt demonstrates the shift from his personal experience to what it means to be a teacher in Singapore and how this newly gained self-awareness will lead to a change in his practice. His groupmates were equally convinced of this as they unanimously decided to include this insight in their presentation.

## 5. Implications

While this is only a small study, I hope it demonstrates that conducting research and having discussions is a valuable platform for pre-service teachers to develop their professional identities. Dan's development from being unconsciously bound by his circumstances to taking back his agency (and confidence) will potentially help his students to not be "crippled" by language ideologies like him. As the group came to this conclusion together, all members benefitted from this discussion.

I hope this study shows that increasing awareness of identity (and how one comes to hold a particular identity) can lead to an integration of theory and practice. Its benefits are not simply improvements of EL teacher's content knowledge but also in their attitudes and pedagogies. For more intentional encouragement of reflections on identities during group discussions, I would suggest questions like "Do I hold similar/different beliefs? Why? How will this affect my role and practice as a teacher?" This will potentially help more pre-service teachers develop their professional identities through research.

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## Biodata

Cherise Shi Ling Teo was trained as a primary school teacher in Singapore before obtaining a PhD in English Language. She is currently a lecturer in the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.



## Book Review: *Mentoring teachers to research their classrooms: A practical guide* (2020)

Rhian Webb

University of South Wales

With the increase of participation in teacher-research globally, Smith's (2020) *Mentoring teachers to research their classrooms: A practical guide*, establishes pioneering, specific guidance, which enables mentors to empower teacher-researchers through exploratory action research processes. The guidance is drawn from Smith's direct experiences co-ordinating British Council mentoring schemes in low resourced Indian and Nepalese classrooms. However, the mentor guidance can be used in any teacher-research setting by both experienced and novice mentors.

The book, which can be googled and downloaded for free, assumes no prior knowledge of research. It is divided into two parts with 12 self-contained units that can be used as a step-by-step mentor guide or as a reference guide for topic clarification. All units are presented through insights, ideas, activities and QR coded videos from Smith's overseas work. Additional reading suggestions and answer guides are included.

Part one (units 1-6) cements mentoring foundations through the clarification of research principles and practices. Unit 1 introduces by stating the book's usefulness for a range of participants, clarifies associated terminology and outlines the stages involved in exploratory action research. Unit 2 characterises a mentor's role and amongst other things, gives guidance about how mentors need to empower teacher-researchers to undertake individual discoveries through support and questioning. Unit 3 provides scaffolding guidelines, which enable mentors to transition their mentees from informal and reflective teachers into teacher-researchers, who can make evidenced informed change by exploring and analysing classroom puzzles. Unit 4 outlines practical guidance to help mentors identify appropriate mentees. Unit 5 encourages thought about planning, timeframes, communicating and record-keeping. Finally, unit 6 emphasises the importance of the mentors reflecting on their individual personal development.

Part two (units 7-12) provides guidance on six areas associated with a mentor's role in the teacher-research process: topic selection, development of research questions, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, evaluation and interpretation of findings, research findings sharing and reflection on the process.

Smith starts unit 7 by stating, “Teacher-research is usually motivated by an issue which arises in a teacher’s own classroom experience” (p. 39), which encapsulates the principle of exploratory action research. Guidelines to elicit teachers’ classroom successes and problems are presented and the importance of focusing on one area to research, by thinking about what is beneficial, practical, interesting and important is emphasised. Unit 8 tackles the difficulty of generating research questions. Useful deconstructed conversations demonstrate how mentors can empower teachers to create questions individually in the exploratory stage. Unit 9 focuses on data collection, where types of often overlooked data from lessons are validated as appropriate to use. The mentor’s importance to support both quantitative and qualitative data analysis is dealt with in unit 10, where associated challenges are acknowledged. Unit 11 encourages readers to question the development from the exploratory to the action stage of research. Should the desire to make a change be considered appropriate, then guidance to support the formation of action research questions, types of data collection and forms of analysis and interpretation is given. Finally, unit 12 gives reasons and guidance to share both teacher-researchers’ findings and the mentors’ experiences of the process. Informal, formal and written and oral ways to share, in a supportive manner, are outlined.

Smith has created a ground-breaking contribution to exploratory action research, which highlights the pivotal role mentors take. Importantly, Smith invites readers to forward feedback from personal mentoring experiences to ensure a stronger understanding of how guidance for successful mentoring evolves.

#### Biodata



Dr Rhian Webb is a senior lecturer in TESOL at the University of South Wales, UK. She has over 20 years of TESOL experience and has taught in Thailand, Australia, Japan and the UK. Her main research interest examines UK native speakers’ knowledge about grammar. More recently, she has collaborated with UK language schools to develop effective online learning environments.

# Exploratory Practice: Understanding monotony in my English classes

**Leandro Novaes da Silva**

Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro

## 1. Introduction

The quality of life in the classroom has been an issue which teachers, researchers and other classroom practitioners are concerned about. This paper emerged from an idea to show how the passion for the life in the classroom is still alive in the heart of some educators.

I have been studying the principles of Exploratory Practice (EP), which contribute to developing criticality in those who are interested in understanding the quality of life in the classroom, and this has helped me throughout my academic and professional life. At times, I got really disappointed because I believed my students viewed some of my classes as monotonous, especially when they appeared reluctant to participate. After reading about the principles of EP, I realized that what I was actually worried about was the quality of my work without understanding what was going on in my classes.

The aim of this paper is to report on an EP experience with my students when I was trying to understand the puzzle “Why are some of my classes monotonous?” I used to believe that monotony only had to do with (1) a lack of teacher dynamism, (2) technical procedures in a classroom or (3) a lack of students’ participation and interaction in class due to a teacher’s incapability for following an appropriate lesson plan and delivering an interesting English class.

To put this into context, during my Specialization course at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, I carried out an investigation which resulted in a monograph (Silva, 2019) in which I report and discuss the understandings generated after I decided to survey the issue “monotony” by investigating my students’ views on the topic. I used to believe that monotony really existed and that teachers could use techniques while delivering their classes in order to avoid monotony. However, in my effort to understand the quality of life in my classes throughout this investigation, I started deconstructing the belief of an “ideal class” which had initially led me to think monotonous classes could be a threat for the teaching-learning process.

In the following section, I provide more information about the context in which my research was carried out. After that, I describe the activities which I used to

understand my students' perspectives about their English language classes. At the end, I share what I have learned throughout the experience.

## 2. Context

As a teacher, I cared about my English classes, which is why I decided to keep on studying. In 2013, I got a promotion and became pedagogic coordinator at the same English course where I had been teaching all these years. It is a renowned institution with branches in several states in Brazil. As the other teachers did, I used to teach English to groups of up to 18 students, always trying to make classes meaningful and interesting for them. Teachers are supported by one coordinator in each branch and coordinators report back to the head of the pedagogical department. The pedagogical department is located in the franchisor located in the state of Rio de Janeiro where there are annual meetings for coordinators and teachers.

When I became responsible for training ten teachers of my branch, my view in relation to monotony inside the classroom may have been affected by the orientation given by the language course pedagogical department. The Head of the pedagogical department used to give some instructions when it comes to an "ideal class". In her opinion, teachers should work as facilitators and strictly follow the Communicative Approach principles. Teachers should also deliver entertaining classes in which students can feel happy as if they were clients who have just got an amazing product. I may have been inclined to share such a point of view looking for the most effective way of delivering my classes and expressing my views to the teachers in the course.

## 3. Exploratory Practice

In 2017, I had an opportunity to take a specialization course at PUC-Rio where I learned about the principles of Exploratory Practice (Allwright & Hanks, 2009, pp. 149-155) and I came to deconstruct some of my beliefs when it comes to the teaching-learning process in my classes:

- Put "quality of life" first
- Work primarily to understand classroom language learning
- Work for mutual development
- Work to bring people together
- Involve everybody
- Make the work a continuous enterprise
- Integrate the work for understanding into "existing curricular practices" (minimize the burden, maximize sustainability)

I learned that it is possible to prioritize the quality of life in the classroom when teachers are aware of their power to transform the working environment and when all participants are involved in the process of working for understanding first instead of rushing into solutions. Sometimes we can find teachers just acting instinctively keeping activities that seem to be working in the classroom and sometimes

abandoning what they believe is not working, as I used to do. However, it seems to be senseless to simply presume to know whether or not an idea or an activity works when there is no work or effort to understand why.

Thus, I adopt the positioning of EP in order to generate data with the students themselves and produce a reflective process. EP makes it possible to approach the puzzle or question to be investigated and to discuss with the participants issues related to the teaching-learning process. I learned that PEPAs, “Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activities” (Miller, 2012; Hanks, 2017), can be used as tools to understand the students' perspective in relation to their own classes. I concluded that I could use a PEPA, in other words, an adaptation made to a classroom activity that would allow students to work with the pedagogic content of the lesson and engage in reflection upon a specific topic or puzzle. This may contribute to the understanding of what is going on in the classroom. In the remainder of this paper, I explain how I used a PEPA with my students, who were over 18 years old, and what I learnt from that experience.

#### 4. Using a PEPA

In one of my advanced students' English classes, I reviewed the modal verbs and their functions in order to elicit from the students the suggestive function “should”. Then, I invited them to create a poster and sum up the ideas from the previous classes by giving suggestions concerning the quality of life of our classes. The title of the Poster was “A teacher whose class is not monotonous should...”. That was my strategy to understand their perspective when it comes to the life in our classes.

They managed to write their suggestions on a piece of paper after I had distributed some colored pens. They were also asked to produce a drawing which could reflect their comments. Their participation impressed me because I wondered if they would find the activity too childish for them. They could write their comments and glue the pieces of paper on the board. They cooperated and exceeded my expectations. Most of them suggested activities which could promote some dynamism or interaction in the classes. In one of drawings, a student drew a pizza suggesting we could have pizza together, as a class. In short, we could bring all the ingredients to prepare a pizza inside the classroom. It would be an opportunity to interact, learn new words in English and know how to order a pizza.

My students' ideas reflected how some teachers and I have associated the ideal class with the use of entertaining and motivating activities. However, through my contact with the principles of EP and by analyzing my students' perspectives, I realized that I used to be blind in relation to my own traditional beliefs. My focus was exclusively on preventing my students from being bored in my classes. Now I am aware that I will never be able to control everything that happens in the classroom.

I came to understand that monotonous classes may not represent a threat for the learning process after another moment of interaction with my students. I was teaching modal verbs in one of my classes and I decided to carry out an activity to make my students come to the board and help me with the understanding of my puzzle while simultaneously exercising what they have learned. Their answers

helped me understand the importance of a reflexive process in which teachers and students work for mutual development before working for changes. I transcribe below one of my students' answers which are also available in my own monograph (Silva, 2019, p. 54). The items in bold represent the teacher's questions written on a colorful sheet of paper; the rest of the text represents one student's responses.

<b>What should teachers do to make their classes more entertaining in the future?</b>
They should bring more images, videos and games with activities that allow us to understand what it means. Explain in a calmer way and not come out saying many difficult and fast sentences.
<b>What can a teacher do to deliver an interesting class for you?</b>
A teacher can make a quiz, play games, use English movies and etc.
<b>What could your previous teachers have done in their classes?</b>
Teachers could have taught more with music and movies, use games.

Table: Sample student's answers to teacher's questions

When my students were asked to exercise the use of modals, simultaneously they were led to reflect critically on extra ideas to make their classes more entertaining and interesting. Contrary to my understandings of monotony, the students do not recommend that the teacher stops using grammatical exercises nor even banishes reading and writing tasks. Instead, they just want their classes to also reflect what they live in their everyday lives. Probably, my students do not want their classes to be like a prison where they cannot have contact with the outside world. That may be why they provide ideas which may result in more motivating classes: games, music, movies, funny activities and so on. To sum up, if it is not entertaining, it does not matter for them.

I realized that the real threat in education is preventing ourselves from understanding why a phenomenon happens in the classroom or the individuality of our students and their needs. The learning process requires collaboration between teachers and students. By analyzing my students' contributions (PEPAs), I understood that my students may not want their teacher to ignore what they do in their everyday lives. Sometimes, teachers worry more about following a pedagogical department's instructions and standardize their way of delivering their classes. It may be naïve to believe that students' lives outside of the classroom have nothing to do with the classroom life, and disregarding the everyday life in the classroom is all about monotony for me. Monotony could be defined as disregarding learners' lives in the classroom. Teachers should be aware of their students' needs and prepare activities which can be meaningful as well as challenging for the students.

5. Final Thoughts

As a result of this investigation it is now possible to affirm that monotony does not exist. In fact, there is a belief of an "ideal class" that each individual may have, indicating whether a class is monotonous or not. Classes are not homogeneous for everyone and students' perception in relation to their classes may differ completely. By trying to understand monotonous classes, I could understand myself. I recognized

some beliefs I still had. I could figure out that somehow I was excessively prioritizing the quality of my work and looking for efficiency. It is of limited use to only master teaching techniques or the use of technological devices. Teachers should also focus on the quality of life in the classroom. In fact, all these aspects can go hand in hand with maintaining classroom life because the quality of classroom life has to do with caring about the efficiency of a teacher's work as well as caring about students' needs. Knowing how things really stand can be a starting point for improvement.

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## Biodata

Leandro Novaes da Silva is Specialist in English Language from Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Master in Linguistic Studies from State University of Rio de Janeiro and researcher sponsored by FAPERJ. [leandroleo658@gmail.com.br](mailto:leandroleo658@gmail.com.br).

# Natural speech in the globalized era: Reading and telling stories in the EFL classroom

**Veronica Marquez Moreno**  
Playa Ancha University

## 1. Introduction

This action-research seeks to explore adult students' natural conversations through telling personal stories. It takes place in an English in-office training course in Santiago, Chile. This course is designed to improve students' English language proficiency, a skill that is greatly needed to enhance students' professional development. My classroom is centered on teaching adults in their own offices from a wide variety of professions and business responsibilities.

In this globalized world, conversation involves negotiating meanings with other native and non-native speakers. In the traditional classroom, students tend to feel that the communication they normally engage in is artificial rather than natural. To help develop students' oral performance, in this research project students read short stories from around the globe and then analyzed them critically followed by a classroom discussion about social issues. This was done for two reasons: to raise students' cultural awareness and to provide a platform for them to think and speak about their personal memories, stories, and experiences. This study emphasizes the need to take into account natural speech in the EFL classroom. It also shows the positive effects of using literature to address social problems in classroom conversation, thus creating context for students to tell their personal stories.

## 2. Background

Talking is an essential part of communication which is situated in "real-time" and co-constructed with others while the discussion unfolds (Goh & Burns, 2012). From a linguistic perspective, Eggins and Slade (2004) wrote that speakers do not have pre-planned scripts of the conversation, talking is a process of negotiated meaning, functionally motivated in order to accomplish pragmatic tasks or to have a simple casual conversation. Applied linguists Kramsch and Zhu Hua (2012) add that interacting entails a set of random linguistic forms applied to a cultural context belonging to the real world, as well as meanings of culture expressed through the language. Hence, learners intrinsically should approach language and culture from their own presupposition about culture in a conversation: by reflecting on different



stories happening in different contexts; being able to talk about their own experiences and memories; and, sharing their opinions about the world, thus implying their perceptions and feelings.

### **2.1. Cultural awareness: A need in the EFL Classroom**

The development of intercultural competence is essential to be able to communicate with people from different cultures, especially in an increasingly globalized world. Non-authentic and synthetic material, such as memorizing scripted dialogues provided by a book, is one of the primary obstacles that hold back the development of intercultural competence. Such material does not invite students to practice critical understanding of social interaction, e.g. what is happening in the conversational situation; how meanings are created; how identity is developed and negotiated; and how the relation between culture and language are transformed discursively (Kramsch & Zhu Hua, 2012). This is important, so students can reflect about this relationship between culture and language and its context. Thus, they can observe the use of language in relation to the culture of the users in different dimensions and to themselves. This leads to an inner reflection based on Byram's (2012) Critical Cultural Awareness, which views critically students' own communities and society as well as that of other countries.

### **2.2. Conversation: A Natural Speech**

Humans are social beings that interact with others in many circumstances and on many topics. This is also the main goal of language learners: to be able to converse as naturally as they do in the L1. Language permits and sustains our everyday talk, where we construe messages as an exchange of meanings. In this exchange, conversation has a particular role in construing social identity and interpersonal relationships (Eggins & Slade 2004). Among the many types of conversation, the one that is tackled in this research is telling stories. Sharing stories, whether by retelling or reading, gives a sense of identity that is connected to the world (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). A common practice in casual conversations, this creates room for the narrator not only to tell a story, but also to share the social experiences which are shared and understood in the social context (Eggins & Slade 2004).

In keeping with this verbally shared knowledge, it has been found that conversations are characterized by common features such as grammatical reductions like add-on strategies (Biber, 1999). Add-on strategies can be described thus as utterances which are mostly composed by clauses. In spoken language there is a relation between embedding and coordination clauses where there is no overlap but linear sequences of finite clause-units (C-units) linked mainly through conjunctions (e.g. and, but, because, and so). This does not raise many problems in the process of hearing or speaking in a conversation, since the add-on strategy minimizes the pressure on the working memory (Biber, 1999).

### 3. Methodology

The group I worked with consisted of 4 students who are employed in the Ministry of Energy in Santiago. This course is an English training course that comprises 50 hours in total, 4 hours a week. They are all professional adults from the engineering and sciences fields, their average age was 30, and their language level was intermediate B1. I considered this intervention to last 2 Action-Research Cycles, where each cycle was 2 lessons of 60-120 minutes, 4 lessons in total.

Prior to this, I conducted a survey among them, asking them the following questions: (1) Describe how many times a day/ a week/ a month you use English; (2) From 1 to 5 evaluate the tasks according to importance "professionally and personally" (e.g. telephone call, meetings, writing emails, etc.). This specific group was highly interested in engaging in conversation because of their job requirements: they were supposed to travel to many countries or interact with international guests using English as a lingua franca.

Three instruments were used to collect the data for this research: (1) students' written reflection, 2) teacher's journal, and 3) lesson recordings. At the end of the intervention, students were asked to self-assess and reflect on the positive and/or negative aspects of the activities, what they had learned and improved. The lesson recordings were done during the first and final conversation when personal stories were shared. These recordings were transcribed and analyzed for clausal and non-clausal units (C-units model) (Biber, 1999). This C-units were counted and compared using Biber's (1999) framework: the greater the number of C-units, the more use of natural conversation.

In every lesson, we read one of the following intercultural short stories: (1) "My Name" by Sandra Cisneros, (2) "Mericans" by Sandra Cisneros, (3) "The Smiling People" by Osama Alomar and (4) "A Tiny Seed: The Story of Wangari Maathai" by Nicola Rijdsdijk. Each lesson was divided into four stages (see Appendix for a sample lesson plan). The main purpose of following this sequence was to make students culturally aware and engage with other communities and societies (Byram, 2012), so as to connect them with their own by conversing through personal stories.

At Stage 1, I provided learners with a recycled warm-up activity about connectors (but, because, and, and so). Then, students read the short story quietly, underlining words or phrases that they did not understand in the story.

At Stage 2, we went through selected vocabulary items, analyzing critically the meaning behind them. The objective was to get students acquainted with the meanings of the social practice and social identity as suggested in the text and how the lexical meanings of the text were used. While going through the process of reading the story, students could share their opinion about the cultural features of the story, reflecting at the same time on their own lives.

At Stage 3, students wrote a reflection about the reading questions related to the short story which also connected with students' life. For instance, as part of the lesson centred around "My Name" by Sandra Cisneros we discussed the following: "Do you like your name? What is the story behind your name?" or "Which social problem do you think connects with your life (past or present)?" Using the notes

from the previous stage, students were encouraged to write a quick response to the questions, but instead of writing full sentences students wrote notes.

At Stage 4, the written reflections that students wrote were connected to the personal stories they shared. The purpose was to encourage students to talk about themselves without paying attention to the correct use of linguistic forms. The task was meant to lure students away from giving opinions about each other's reflections, and to develop conversations via stories. Students felt free to use the language and to negotiate meanings without being judged or corrected. Thus, in these conversations cultural and language awareness was constructed.

#### 4. Conclusion and reflection

The social crisis that we were facing while this intervention was underway was felt during my research. We were meant to have 4 lessons, unfortunately, some of the lessons suffered interruptions. Students were late to class or missed classes, and were worried about what was happening outside the classroom. There were days when we had to leave the room earlier than planned for safety reasons.

Regardless, there was a major turnaround in the last lesson of the intervention. Students were on time to class, there was no emergency call to leave the building, and they were focused and relaxed. Finally, results showed an increase of 33.75% of clausal units, 30.43% of words, and 45% of non-clausal units used. Also, students' feedback revealed a positive impact in their speaking: they felt more comfortable, free and fluent while interacting. Below are several example student reflections:

- "I really enjoy and I could talk almost without I have to think in Spanish."
- "In other courses, some time you have to say something but you have to make a really big effort in order to invent something to say."
- "One of the most complicated issues to speak English for me is the fluency, and with this methodology, I felt that I spoke free to talk."

By reading short stories, students were able to use them as a medium for practicing natural conversation through sharing their stories. For my students, who have to engage in the target language in different types of professional interactions, it was important to practice English outside the formal conversation formats of the traditional coursebook. Therefore, the ultimate goal of this intervention was to give students a tool that they can use in the real context. In the classroom we shared personal stories, we read short stories from different parts of the world, and we discussed the social problems from the stories in relation to ours. Until this research, I always felt I was not preparing students to interact with a variety of cultures.

In this research project, students were able to explore the social realities of different settings from the short stories. The critical analysis of those stories gave students the opportunity not only to understand the foreign language and the culture portrayed in the story, but to also appraise their own culture. Scrutinizing language-culture through critical cultural awareness allowed students to discuss

how social problems and realities are similarly found in their own culture. Short stories are a good platform for students to become more aware of both their own and target culture within a global perspective. Thus, learners should be exposed to diverse aspects of a foreign culture, including reading about alternative voices and considering less represented issues.

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## Biodata

Veronica Marquez Moreno is an EFL teacher from Playa Ancha University of Valparaíso and a Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics in EFL of Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. She has been teaching English as a foreign language for the past 10 years, the last 7 of which to adult professionals.

## Appendix: Example lesson plan

Level: Intermediate Topic: "My Name" by Sandra Cisneros Duration: 80 minutes Objective: To develop language and culture awareness				
Stage	Activity	Time	Resources	Learning goal
1. People from different cultures	- Students review the activity focused on connectors in the coursebook, then check how they were used in a real conversation. - Students read the short story "My name" by Sandra Cisneros.	45 min	Short story And, so, because, but (coursebook's activity) Conversation (Transcript with connectors in bold )	To read authentic texts
2. Re-read the story	Students re-read the story out loud in the group. The text will be analyzed critically and discussed with the students.	15	Short story	To critically analyze a text
3. Written reflection	- Students write reflection notes. - Students are encouraged not to write complete sentences, but use notes or bullet points.	10	Questions to encourage students to reflect on their own culture and personal experiences.	To write reflectively
4. Recount their story	Students retell events and share their reflections creating conversations as they do in their L1.	15	-Students' own reflections. -Students are recorded (tool)	To converse about their own experiences and stories

# Exploratory action research: Competitive games to motivate foundation students

**Erin Coyle**

University of Technology and Applied Sciences

## 1. Introduction

The General Foundation Programme (GFP) at a college in the Sultanate of Oman helps students develop study skills while improving their English language (Al-Issa, 2014). Motivating students can be a challenge in this program when the only marks that count are the midterm and final exam. Based on my own experience, group competitive games seemed to motivate the students because they wanted to be the winner of the games. Therefore, this exploratory action research was of personal interest to determine how competitive review games can motivate students to improve their English.

Some of the games included Grammar Jeopardy review games, Tic Tac Toe using grammar to review what the students had learnt that week, such as the present continuous and present simple tenses. Word Challenge was another game where the students had a word and they had to make new words using the letters from the first word. The reasoning behind this game was to practice vocabulary and spelling.

Data was collected through surveys, peer observation and a self-reflection journal. First, a look at the literature will highlight the importance of games and how they can motivate students in the Sultanate of Oman. Next, the methodology will be highlighted. Then a look at the results will be featured, followed by some limitations and concluding thoughts.

## 2. Literature Review: Games for English language learning

Games and collaborative learning can play a vital role in improving students' motivation. At Sultan Qaboos University, Al-Mahrooqi & Tabakow (2013) gave fifty-two participants questionnaires to gain perspective on drama workshops at the university with the English and Translation Society. Results showed that drama can improve confidence, improve speaking and presentation skills, and even help students learn to collaborate (Al-Mahrooqi & Tabakow, 2013). While drama is not considered the same as competitive games, it is still a form of collaborative learning, which shows can boost learners' motivation and willingness to learn.

Al-Bulushi and Al-Issa (2017) also agree that games 'combine linguistic, psychological and social elements that have been found to have considerable advantages and impact in foreign language learning' (p. 12).

Youxin (2010, cited in Al-Bulushi & Al-Issa, 2017) indicates games are beneficial for both teachers and students because it is a way for teachers to introduce variety to their lessons and a chance for students to feel more relaxed when they are learning.

However, it is important to know as Vernon (2008, cited in Al-Bulushi & Al-Issa, 2017) suggests, games may not work for all students. It is important to make sure teachers do not let students be left out, and to make sure they keep a learning objective in mind when games are incorporated into the classroom.

From my personal observations, games have been a way to motivate learners while keeping them engaged. The next section will highlight the methodology used for this classroom exploratory action research.

### 3. Methodology

Exploratory Action Research was the approach employed in classroom study. This type of research is a way for teachers to try to solve a problem in the classroom, reflect on their teaching to improve themselves, while gathering and analysing information (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). This study is exploratory because according to Smith and Rebolledo (2018), one should identify a problem in the classroom first and determine how data could be collected. Once the pre-stages are completed, the action part takes place, which includes acting on changes to be made, observing the changes, followed by interpreting and reflecting on the data (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). The exploration in this study first started with determining how students could gain motivation in the classroom by implementing competitive games.

Data was gathered via surveys, peer observation and self-reflection journals. It allowed me to gain some perspective from students, a colleague, and a chance to reflect upon my teaching. After deciding on data collection, agreeing with a colleague how peer observation would be organised, and setting up reflection journals, a timeline for the games was set up. In the fall semester games were held once a week for four weeks and in the spring semester games were held for eight weeks.

The total number of participants was thirty-seven students in a foundation programme at a college in Sur, the Sultanate of Oman over two semesters during the 2019-2020 academic year. Twenty-five students took part in the fall semester and twelve students took part in the spring semester. They were chosen because they were my students. The fall semester included learners in level B who are students in a pre-intermediate class and the spring semester included a class in level A who are intermediate level students. The fall semester only included four weeks of research due to time constraints and the spring semester was only eight weeks because of outside factors. While this was a small sample, it was still important to understand how games can motivate my students.

I sought to answer the following research question: How can competitive games motivate students?

One pre-survey written in both Arabic and English was given to the students prior to the start of the research, to get an idea from them how they feel about competitive games and if they thought this type of learning could help them improve their English. The survey was short, so it did not take long to complete in class.

The peer observation process was organized together with my colleague, who, we decided, would observe two lessons. We both agreed that two lessons were necessary to see the difference between student motivation on a game day versus a non-game day. My colleague used an observation form making comments on interactions and classroom environment as well as providing suggestions for future lessons. Peer observation took place in the fall semester twice for a total of two hours, one class during competitive games and one regular class, which included group and pair work while performing tasks from the book and additional reading and speaking supplementary activities. Peer observation was done three times in the spring semester for a total of three hours, including a regular class, a class holding competitive games and another class which tried to incorporate games into the lesson. A class holding competitive games indicates that the game was separate from the lesson. In other words, a separate grammar review game would take place at the end of the class for thirty or forty minutes, so the game would not necessarily review material from that day. Trying to incorporate games into the lesson is defined as holding a timed activity on the current lesson, such as a listening or speaking task from the book. For example, students would have a set time to take turns reading out loud while the other group members have to take notes and answer questions in the book. Then they would discuss their answers and have ten minutes to finish.

Self-reflection journals were written twice a week in both semesters on a game day and non-game day. These notes were taken immediately following the class. This is also another approach that can be useful in becoming aware of one's own perceptions in one's teaching (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018).

#### 4. Results and discussion

My study showed that games helped improve my students' English, kept them engaged and facilitated their work together as a team. From the survey, the majority of participants agreed that competitive review games can help build confidence, learn new vocabulary, and encourage students to work harder. One student wrote: "Games make me feel more confident and maybe clever". This finding was also reported by Youxin (2010, cited in Al-Bulushi & Al-Issa, 2017), who also found that games encourage students to interact with each other and build confidence.

From my colleague's observations, "students were engaged, worked together and were able to correct themselves". The self-reflection journals highlighted that 'students who normally do not participate were working with their classmates to complete the tasks. This also coincides with the results from Al-Bulushi and Al-Issa's study (2017).

#### 4.1. Limitations

There were some limitations in this study. First, a small sample of students participated, and time constraints were another factor. This exploratory action research was conducted over two short semesters due to outside circumstances that were out of my control. Although I asked students for feedback after some lessons, there were also intentions to do interviews and focus groups at the end of both semesters to gain more insight into motivation. My intention was also to incorporate more timed activity games into the lessons, instead of doing only separate review games, however time affected this.

#### 5. Conclusion

Evidence showed that games can encourage students to work together and learn new vocabulary. This research affected me professionally by making me realize that student lack of motivation is not necessarily because of my teaching. It was also my first time conducting research in this setting which has now allowed me to try to improve my teaching with suggestions from my colleague. One suggestion included incorporating new games.

I would recommend that teachers engage in research in their contexts as a way to further explore successes or problems in the classroom. This would give some insight into any issues there might be and ways to solve them. My intention in the future is to collaborate with colleagues to continue to implement games in the classroom to gain more insight into this ongoing question of student motivation.

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#### Biodata



Erin Coyle has just over seven years of experience teaching general and academic English in China and the Sultanate of Oman. Past talks include Exploratory Action Research at Oman's 20th International ELT conference and a project-based learning presentation at the 24 Annual TESOL Arabia International conference. She is a member of the British Council ELT professional network.  
 Email: [erinc.sur@cas.edu.om](mailto:erinc.sur@cas.edu.om).



# Using the arts to support student teacher reflection: Towards ‘thirdspace’ thinking

Elena Ončevska Ager

Saints Cyril and Methodius University

## 1. Introduction

According to Damasio (1994), all human behaviour is guided by cognition, emotion and motivation, i.e. by what we know/think/believe, by what we feel and by what we want/need. In teachers’ busy hands-on lives, there’s usually little time to stop and interrogate the above aspects which can powerfully inform teaching practice. This is particularly true for student teachers (STs), who might find themselves overwhelmed by the practicalities of teaching and may need support to make time to reflect on their experiences of teaching in meaningful ways.

In this article I describe the process of developing a set of workshops designed to do exactly that: offer a structured and safe environment for STs to experience deep, multi-layered reflection while collaboratively using the arts to express themselves. The STs were in the final year of their undergraduate English language teacher education programme.

I first review the literature that informed the workshops design and then move on to explain how the workshops were organised. I briefly discuss the feedback from the STs and share some personal reflections as the data elicited by the project is yet to be analysed.

## 2. The literature

One of the major challenges in supporting professional reflection in a pre-service context (though not only!) is how to scaffold STs to engage in reflection beyond describing and/or commenting on how things currently are. This is termed as ‘firstspace’ by Soja (1996), i.e. the space inhabited by the everyday practices and relationships which society often takes for granted. In teaching terms, ‘firstspace’ may refer to what students and teachers do in their classrooms, how they relate to one another, and what practices emerge as a result. Soja’s (ibid.) ‘secondspace’ refers to the less palpable, more abstract, e.g. ideological, factors that shape the ‘firstspace’ and are, in turn, shaped by it. For instance, one can analyse the ways in which learning environments are set up, and the implications such set-ups have for learning/teaching. Official documents (e.g. policy documents, curricula, syllabi) can

be analysed in terms of how knowledge is conceptualised: as a body of facts to be memorised or as an evolving construct, to be continually interrogated and/or co-constructed. Soya's (ibid.) 'thirdspace', on the other hand, is a space for imagining alternatives realities, thus complementing and/or challenging existing 'first-' and 'secondspaces'. Therefore, it can be said that deep reflection would go beyond 'first-' and 'secondspace' considerations, to also embrace the 'thirdspace'.

One way to encourage creativity, including risk-taking, in considering what is beyond 'firstspace' is to offer reflective formats based on activities that have a track-record of lowering anxiety and promoting belonging. One such format, which is also used to explore conflict and emotionally charged situations more generally, is arts-based reflection, i.e. using drawings, collage, metaphor writing, photo-elicitation, timelining, to name but a few techniques, as a means of personal expression. According to McKay and Barton's (2018) comprehensive literature review, arts-based reflection has the potential to elicit important cognitive, emotional and motivational content, while enabling deep, 'second-' and 'thirdspace' engagement with it. Creating and/or working with existing visuals (e.g. in collage) reflects the fragmented nature of thinking, feeling and needing, as well as the gradual process of collecting and organising the fragments in order to make sense of them in the process of negotiating one's identity as a teacher. Being able to use the arts collaboratively adds an element of collegiality in sharing one's own perspectives and considering others'. There is also the important element of reassurance to all involved, in the sense that participants realise they are not alone in thinking/feeling/needing in the ways they do. Moreover, all participants can tap into the group as an important source of motivation to continue investigating issues further, e.g. by goal-setting. McKay and Barton (ibid.) highlight that the above benefits of collaborative arts-based reflection can be linked to teacher resilience and wellbeing.

### 3. The project

To help create more varied opportunities for reflection for pre-service teachers so they can inhabit more than the 'firstspace', an Australian colleague of mine and I (currently based in North Macedonia) developed a set of face-to-face workshops to give our STs some hands-on experience of using arts-based reflection, and ran the workshops in our respective pre-service English language teacher contexts. We advertised our projects among our student teachers (STs) from various modules, and worked with those who voluntarily signed up; coincidentally, we ended up working with groups of approx. 10 STs in each context.

The aim of our project was two-fold: to get STs to reflect on what makes (A) a quality learning environment and (B) a quality language teacher. The STs worked in groups of 3-4 on each task, drawing their ideal classrooms for Task A, and creating 'ideal teacher' collage using popular magazines for Task B. In both cases, they labelled in writing what their drawings/collage represented. Then, each group collaboratively presented their output to the other groups, providing explanation for the thinking which informed the selection of items they included. Once the groups

fed back, we had whole-class discussions, one following Task A and another following Task B, guided by the questions below. The issues discussed after each task, however, were similar, which is why I present the discussion prompts as one list:

- How do the features of the ideal classroom compare to the environments the STs experienced so far? How do the ideal teacher features compare to their current self-perception?
- Which features of the 'ideal', esp. with regard to the ideal teacher task, are possible to attain in the first 5 years of teaching practice?
- What challenges do the STs perceive in bridging the gap between the ideal and the current?
- How could such challenges be addressed in general terms?
- How could the STs address some of those challenges in their current/future contexts?
- What consequences may result from not addressing some challenges?
- Which challenges might not be within the STs' control and what impact might such limitations have on them as (future) teachers?

We organised our workshops in such a way that we addressed the above fully in terms of content, though we sometimes diverged in terms of how we went about it, to respond to the affordances of our respective contexts. For instance, we assigned some activities that we didn't have time to address in real time (e.g. the bullet-pointed whole-class discussion above) as individual reflection tasks, to be turned in online. In my context, the STs attended two consecutive workshop sessions, one centred around Task A, and one around Task B. I adapted my STs' Task B whole-class discussion to be completed as an individual written task first and to be discussed with the whole group in real time at a later date.

#### 4. The feedback

The STs seemed to enjoy doing both tasks, particularly Task B (the ideal teacher collage), possibly due to the effect of novelty; while they may have had experience expressing themselves in drawing on other courses, the collage is a relatively underused technique in the Macedonian educational context. Also, while some STs shied away from taking part in the drawing that Task A entailed, they felt as competent as each other to select and justify magazine images to communicate their points in Task B.

The working atmosphere was very relaxed, with STs engaging in louder exchanges than they would do in a regular class, including loud laughter. Using the popular magazines for Task B resulted in their collage outputs featuring contemporary cultural references which one would not necessarily link to teaching – this was one of the sources of humour throughout. Even though the STs came from different modules and did not know each other too well at the start of the first workshop, the group dynamics quickly and visibly improved, with the STs interacting increasingly more actively with each other.

As a teacher educator, Task B was particularly useful, for its informal yet powerful elicitation of STs' priorities when it came to what makes a good teacher. For instance, one group talked, often with some of their previous or current teachers in mind, about the importance of teachers being open-minded, energetic, creative, student-oriented, but also wearing suitable clothes and make-up (see Figure 1). To illustrate the latter point, for instance, the STs chose to use a picture of a famous (some would argue, notorious) local female folk singer who originally wore only a bikini in the picture. The group 'dressed' the singer using crepe paper to highlight the importance of teacher outfit.

It can be argued that what the STs brought to the discussion to start with were predominantly 'firstspace' considerations. The STs' collage, however, quickly offered affordances for 'secondspace' reflection on, e.g. what constitutes a 'suitable' outfit for teachers, which teachers those would be (seeing as the 'dress code' can vary from one teaching context to another), who might be in a position to prescribe such issues as teacher outfit and whether they can be prescribed effectively in the first place, what implications teachers' choice of outfit may have for teaching/learning.

When it comes to topics like teachers' outfit, cultural considerations are also likely to surface, which can add other valuable 'secondspace' layers to the discussion. To extend the STs' reflections to the 'thirdspace', the STs reflected, for instance, on the qualities they would like to work on developing in the first 5 years of their teaching practice to address or challenge the 'first-' and/or 'secondspaces' that we previously discussed together. Such goal-setting, as was argued in the reviewed literature, can be a powerful tool to facilitate teacher identity development, while improving motivation and wellbeing more generally. Also, reflecting on the challenges they might encounter while transitioning to their ideal teacher 'selves', and how they might address them, is another 'thirdspace' exercise which can translate to improved resilience when the STs eventually face professional adversity.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I made the case for using arts-based reflection to support STs in developing effective reflective skills which would enable them to explore teaching phenomena beyond their 'firstspace' surface. By sharing aspects of the workshops design, my STs' response to them and my own initial reflections, I attempted to illustrate the ways in which "arts-based reflection provide[s] the tools for not only new ways of saying but ways of saying more" (McKay, 2018, p. 10), while facilitating positive group dynamics. My STs' feedback during the workshops and the informal feedback they shared following the workshops suggested that the STs had opportunities to inhabit useful 'spaces', very much including 'thirdspaces', to experience hopefully memorable professional development. Needless to say, the principles of using arts-based reflection are easily transferrable to in-service teacher development, as well as to language teaching contexts (for an example of the latter, see Mackay, 2020).

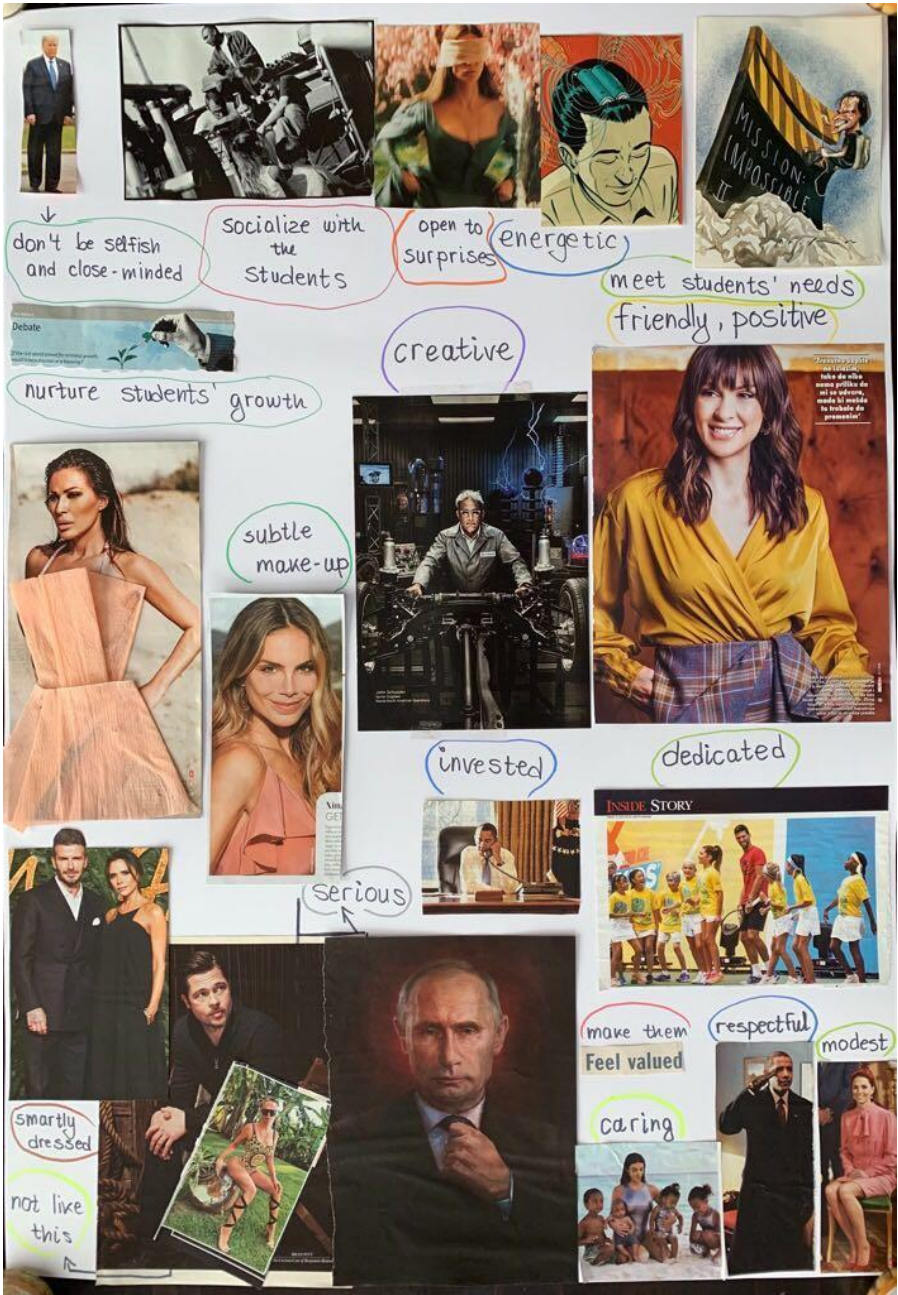


Figure 1: One group of STs' collage

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## Biodata:



Elena Ončevska Ager is Associate Professor at Saints Cyril and Methodius University, North Macedonia. She teaches language teacher education courses, supporting the development of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers, in face-to-face and online contexts. Her research interests include mentoring, motivation, professional wellbeing and teacher agency.



# Responding to EFL teacher demotivation by engaging in reflection

Lorena Salud Gadella Kamstra

University of Essex

## 1. Introduction

The study reported below draws on a larger qualitative investigation which analysed EFL teacher motivation and demotivation in secondary state schools in Spain. Research findings revealed solutions to EFL teacher demotivation. This paper will discuss some of these suggestions, underlining a solution which is within teachers' control – engaging in reflection.

## 2. Literature review

Teacher motivation promotes or hinders learner motivation (Lamb, 2017). Teacher motivation is strongly affected by negative influences and contextual factors (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Despite its significance, the area of teacher motivation has often been overlooked by scholars; its research is now gaining some prominence (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018) but is “still in its infancy” (Urdan, 2014, p. 228).

In this study, participants unveiled the causes of their demotivation and some possible solutions, and these were related to intrinsic or extrinsic sources of demotivation. The intrinsic factors or solutions were produced and managed by teachers and were within their control to some degree. On the other hand, the extrinsic factors or solutions were dependent on others and/or beyond the teachers' control.

In the literature, researchers have shared strategies to enhance teachers' professional experiences and these could, in turn, improve teacher motivation intrinsically or extrinsically. Visualisation techniques, such as revisiting past teaching experiences, and support groups help teachers to fight difficulties (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). Importantly, communicating with others and engaging in dialogic reflection has been found to affect teachers positively (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Teachers have also been advised not to evade challenges but to reflect to solve them (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2015) and to reflect on their practices to prevent excessive negative emotions (Mercer et al., 2016). It is important to clarify that reflection is a “thinking about something” (Mann, 2016, pp. 7-8) process which can occur in one's mind or by writing or talking. When reflecting, teachers can assess their emotions, behaviour and motivation, and find ways to enrich them.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Context and participants

Twenty three EFL teachers working in secondary state schools in Spain were interviewed. As part of a larger investigation (Gadella Kamstra, 2020), the researcher's fieldwork in Spain enabled the arrangement of face-to-face interviews (8/23); the remaining interviews were conducted online (15/23) due to the researcher's inability to extend her stay in Spain at that time.

All participants were Spanish with a teaching experience of approximately 12 years. In the Spanish education context, the EFL subject is compulsory for all students. In addition, teachers take part in a complex public contest to get a teaching job and work as civil servants in state institutions. This competitive examination consists of bureaucratic procedures and written and oral tests. If teachers are successful, they will be granted a secure lifetime position in a school.

#### 3.2. Data collection

Qualitative research was selected as a research framework because it draws attention to people's experiences. This form of research is suitable for finding "the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 11). Qualitative research allowed the investigator to comprehend the notion of teacher (de)motivation thoroughly and to understand teachers' experiences.

Teachers working in Spanish high schools in Madrid, Tenerife and Gran Canaria were invited via postal mail and email because of the researcher's familiarity with these three areas. Due to low response rates, posts were made in social media to invite teachers from any Spanish city. This convenience sample included those teachers who agreed to take part and had the required participant profile (EFL in-service teachers in state secondary institutions in Spain). In-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the (de)motivation of 23 teachers and to identify solutions to teacher demotivation. In average, interviews lasted eighty minutes and included thirty questions about motivators, demotivators, job satisfaction and ways of improvement.

#### 3.3. Data analysis

The coding process involved two coding cycles (Saldaña, 2016). First, codes were assigned to the data and second, codes were grouped into themes by finding patterns. Data analysis involved a non-linear process and followed an emergent approach which evolved throughout the study (Dörnyei, 2007). The interview transcription was facilitated by using online automatic transcription (i.e. converting audio to text). Data were analysed by using NVivo.12 which enabled the interview coding. Codes were organised into themes and after rereading the data, clearer patterns originated which yielded the final findings.



## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Demotivating factors

Intrinsically, teachers were negatively affected by their unrealistic expectations about their job and themselves (19/23) and their lack of vocation to teach (i.e. some never experienced an initial calling to become teachers and this was revealed to demotivate teachers later on in their careers) (16/23). More extrinsically, all teachers were demotivated by their students' misbehaviour and demotivation. In addition, uncooperative relationships with colleagues, supervisors and administrative staff demotivated participants (19/23). All participants were demotivated by the ratio (i.e. the number of students in the classroom) but also the workload (21/23), the school's context (15/23) and the scarce resources (12/23). Teachers also reported being demotivated by the education system (18/23), the lack of recognition (14/23), the public process to obtain a teaching post (13/23) and the curriculum limitations (12/23).

### 4.2. Solutions to teacher demotivation

The participants proposed solutions which they believed could tackle teacher demotivation (see Figure 1).

The participants suggested that teachers who wish to combat their demotivation would benefit from reflecting and analysing the problem (9/23) but also innovating and getting involved in training (15/23) by implementing "some changes" (T20) and learning "new resources" (T23 and T18). More extrinsically, having more teaching support (14/23), cooperation and communication with students and staff (13/23), and empathising with students (9/23) were other recommendations which could resolve some demotivating factors.

In addition, teachers considered that their motivation could be improved by reducing the workload (14/23) and the ratio (14/23), and by establishing limits between their work and private lives (13/23). The workload was said to "foster demotivation" (T17) along with the excessive ratio. As was reported by this teacher, only "if things change in the future; if we have fewer students, better work conditions, less [sic] lessons, I would see myself motivated" (T16). Additionally, participants also proposed being taken "into account" (T13) and more "dialogue" (T20) with the government (10/23) to improve teacher motivation.

It can be observed that most solutions are beyond the teachers' control and cannot be handled by teachers alone. Intervention from policy makers or the national government is needed. In the meantime, teachers can make some changes to battle their demotivation. Solutions such as innovation and training, empathising with students, and reflecting and analysing the problem are mostly within their control. In the next section, the latter will be examined as a powerful intrinsic solution.

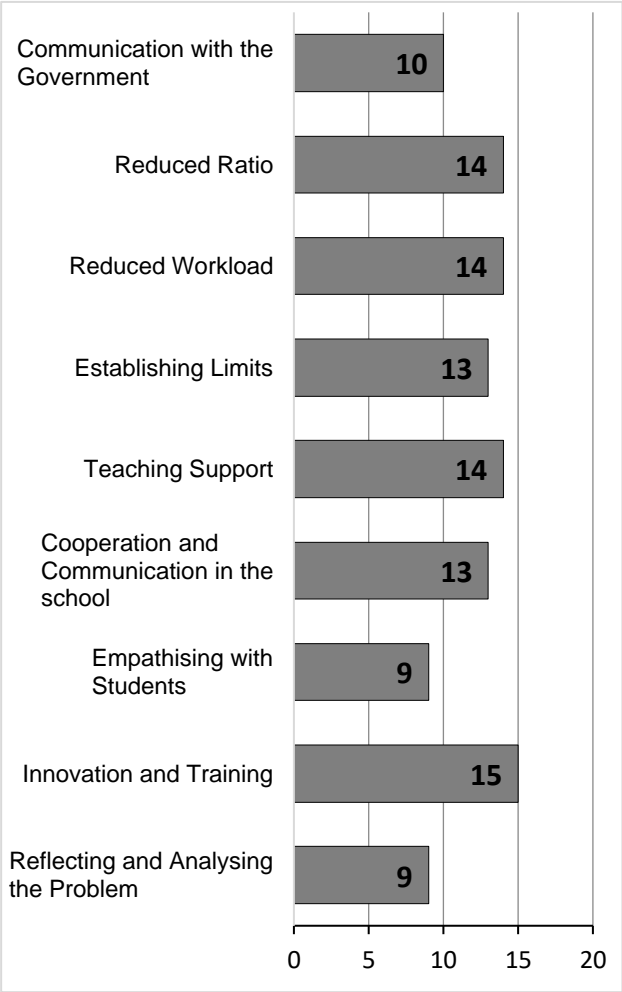


Figure 1. Solutions to Teacher Demotivation

4.3. Reflecting and analysing the problem

Analysing classroom challenges helped the interviewees to “think about solutions [...] to solve the problems” (T6). The participants explained that “thinking objectively” (T9) about the lessons, as advised by Hiver and Dörnyei (2015), and analysing the obstacles would be a way of overcoming demotivation. Although many teachers were aware of the need to “stop and think” (T10 and T7), some realised that tackling demotivation is more than that; “if you feel demotivated you have to do something, not just thinking and praying for motivation, that won't help” (T8). Responding to these demotivators and acting accordingly was vital. The participants mentioned that being “more analytical” (T9), evaluating “why do you feel like this”

and thinking about “how could we change” (T7) the situation would trigger an improvement of teacher motivation. Engaging in reflection was found to help these teachers to “have a clear idea of what is happening” and they insisted that “once you get the real reason behind [the problem], try to implement some changes” (T20).

Reflecting on their practices will also alleviate excessive negative emotions (Mercer et al., 2016). Although several extrinsic demotivators were found to affect these teachers’ motivation, one participant considered these to be “excuses” and urged teachers to focus on “reflecting” and “taking action rather than complaining all the time” (T15). This participant believed that tackling extrinsic demotivators would improve the teaching conditions; however, she maintained that reflecting on the problems and addressing them was more successful when confronting any classroom issues.

#### 4.4. Possible strategies

The participants emphasised the importance of discussing with colleagues the struggles they face. Teacher motivation could be improved by “having more time to discuss and talk to other teachers” considering “a wider perspective” of the learning process with a view to understanding why some teachers encounter problems that others have never come across and “talk effectively” about the obstacles (T9). Other teachers also welcomed “a flexible approach” to “discuss any problems and try to find solutions” within the teaching community (T20). This shows that cooperation eases the process of analysing a problem and finding a solution, as advocated by Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014). Dialogic reflection could also improve teachers’ effectiveness and transform their practices (Rodriguez et al., 2020). In addition, involving students in understanding and solving problems was also mentioned by participants. Some teachers suggested listening to solutions “from the students’ side” too (T20) and having “a meeting with the whole group” of students, to think about solutions and hear their proposals (T6).

Although researchers encourage reflective practices in the literature, many teachers may not be aware of how to engage in reflection efficiently. Teachers may be ignorant to reflective processes and techniques which may enhance their motivation. Less than half of the participants (9/23) regarded reflecting and analysing the problem as a solution to teacher demotivation. This leads to wonder whether most teachers are familiar with these practices and whether they have been trained to engage in reflection and/or to consider reflection as a technique to seize classroom dilemmas.

Some participants in this study engaged in reflection-on-action (after the event) but they could benefit from learning other practices. Pre-service teacher education could raise awareness about other ways of reflecting such as writing reflective journals, observing or being observed, recording their classes or inviting students’ and colleagues’ input. Teachers would gain from learning about the broad spectrum of reflective practices. Reflecting is beneficial to teachers, as was argued by participants, and supports them to face their demotivation and other difficulties, and to understand their practices better. Teacher training often overlooks reflective

practices and emotional training despite its importance for in-service teachers (Gkonou & Miller, 2020). Programmes which include these areas will inspire teachers to become better reflective practitioners.

## 5. Conclusion

This is a small-scale study which does not allow for extensive implications. Nevertheless, this investigation expands research on EFL teacher motivation by showcasing some possible solutions to demotivation. Most solutions reported could not be accomplished by teachers and focusing on improvements which are beyond teachers' control should be avoided to prevent frustration. Those hierarchically above teachers should make changes to solve extrinsic demotivators. Whilst waiting for these much-needed enhancements, teachers would benefit from focusing on those solutions which can be implemented by them. By reflecting and analysing the problem, teachers can address the obstacles they face while feeling empowered to battle their demotivation.

Additionally, practices to learn how to regulate one's emotions and improve one's wellbeing could be introduced in pre-service teacher education in the shape of emotional and reflective training. These practices will enable teachers to consider their own motivation, behaviour and emotions in order to enhance them. With sufficient training, teachers will be able to reflect on and analyse classroom challenges while improving their motivation and flourishing in the profession. Future research should explore language teacher motivation to uncover other ways of supporting teachers overcome their everyday hurdles.

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### Biodata



Dr Lorena Salud Gadella Kamstra (PhD, FHEA) has worked as an EFL Teacher Trainer and Language Teacher at the University of Essex, UK. She has a PhD in English Language Teaching and her research explores EFL teacher motivation and demotivation. Follow her on Twitter @LorenaSGK for other publications and conference presentations.

# Escalating learner participation in a language classroom

Ameena Kidwai

Taibah University

## 1. Introduction

In the context of India, the status of English became well defined with the proposal of the Three Language Formula put forward by the Indian Education Commission (1964–66), which recognized English as an associate official language of the Indian Union. This is essential given the fact that although English enjoys a high status in the wake of globalization, its teaching and learning in the educational institutions (where the medium of instruction is not English) is rather inadequate and unproductive. Kolawole (1998) notes that English language teaching is beset with many challenges, such as lack of relevant resources, insufficient duration of teaching, and conventional styles of instruction. Usually, the learners in vernacular medium schools spend about eight years studying English as a subject before they come to secondary school. Unfortunately, during all this time, the primary emphasis is placed on rote learning and accumulation of knowledge, such as word meanings and grammar rules. In my experience as an English teacher in a secondary school, even after spending years learning the language, many learners are not able to cope with communicative English in the real world; therefore, a reform in the English teaching approaches is the need of the hour.

A program called Access Micro scholarship English Language Program was introduced at the secondary level at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, in 2005. This program was funded by the Regional English Language Office, U.S. Embassy, New Delhi. This program was an endeavor to hone learners' communicative competence by changing the structured pattern of conventional classroom teaching. The learners were from non-elite backgrounds whose medium of instruction was Urdu in Middle School. The classes were held after-school three days a week for 20 months. I was trained to teach using a task-based interactive approach in these classes. This initiative was successful to a great extent; therefore, its pedagogies of teaching and learning formed the crux of my research.

This report presents specific findings from my extensive research on the factors that facilitate or hamper the students' active participation in this after-school English language classroom. Active class participation, a central element of collaborative learning, encourages learners to actively engage in the learning process instead of just memorizing facts and regurgitating them during examinations (Wilson, Pollock,

& Hamann, 2007). Due to limited exposure to communicative activities in their regular English language classrooms, learners are not accustomed to the 'unconventional' methods used in the language program and seem uncomfortable when the focus shifts to them instead of the teacher.

## **2. Objective**

To analyze the factors that facilitate or hamper active participation on the learners' part in their after-school English language classrooms.

## **3. Sample of the study**

This was done through a purposive sampling technique because this study was limited to the Jamia school students and teachers who were part of the Access Micro scholarship English Language Program. There were four groups of 25 students each in the study.

## **4. Research tools for data collection**

### **4.1. Classroom observation**

Classroom observation becomes an unavoidable part of any pedagogical system that aims to improve learning conditions (Nunan, 1992). For this study, I discussed the specific goals for the observed lessons with the peer teacher, who agreed to observe my four different classes of 25 students each. Each class was observed twice with a gap of four weeks. During the observation, the observer kept note of a variety of teaching and learning elements with a Classroom Observation Schedule (Appendix 1).

After each class, the observer discussed her observations of the students' participation during the task activities. This discussion offered profound insights into the planning and delivery of the lessons and the areas in the tasks where the students were found actively engaged or not engaged. Classroom observation helped me to collect relevant research data that aided in an overall understanding of the teaching and learning situations.

### **4.2. Focus group discussions**

Focus group interviews as discussion aim to create regular and candid conversations that address selected topics in depth. For the present study, I floated a variety of questions in the discussion to get the learners talk about relevant learning points. They discussed the challenges faced while attending the program, also the factors that encouraged them to participate, and what inhibited them from interacting. Students were also questioned about the teacher's scaffolding, support, and other strategies that they found encouraged them to participate in classroom activities and speak in English. Focus group interactions saved time and helped gather required in-depth, insightful information to reflect on.

## 5. Analysis of data and findings

While the scientific reliability of such a research mode is debatable, qualitative research based on subjective responses has gained recognition as a valid research approach (Auerbach, Silverstein, & Silverstein, 2003). Qualitative analysis of the observed data and the subjective experiences of participants and the observer played a pivotal role in the interpretation of participation patterns and themes in transcribed data. These patterns and themes from the literature review helped to address the research goal of the study. It was noted that qualitative data analysis is an ongoing process that happened throughout the data collection stage of the research and carried over to the analysis stage. The analysis of this research data provided an understanding of the general processes that arise in language lessons to promote second language development and the relationship between classroom processes and language development.

## 6. Factors which hindered or aided participation

The classroom observation schedules from all the observed classes were used to analyze those factors that deterred or encouraged learners to participate in class activities and discussions.

In the speaking lessons, it was observed that most of the students remained passive during the lesson activities and did not contribute much on their own. It was also observed that the beginner-level learners interacted less and appeared less willing than the next level learners to speak out in class. One of the students pointed out during the focus group discussion: "I was often not too sure about the accuracy of my words, and that discouraged me from speaking during the discussions and sometimes felt left out." Others thought the pace of activities was too fast for them to catch up with the lesson content, which made them lose interest at times in what was going on in the classroom. The findings revealed that since the learners came from conventional classrooms, they found the new task-based approach somewhat overwhelming and unfamiliar.

Moreover, due to the lack of sufficient English Language skills and lower levels of English language proficiency, some of the students were hesitant to participate in the communicative activities of the lesson. Another factor that affected students' participation level was the fear of making mistakes. This apprehension sometimes kept them from sharing their opinions and participating actively in class discussions.

The findings also indicated the role of the teacher and teaching methods affecting classroom participation. The learners shared that if their teachers were enthusiastic, approachable, and friendly, they would feel encouraged to participate in the class activities. It was observed: "The teacher would smile, talk in a non-threatening tone, included a group activity to build a sense of community where even the reluctant students participated." When the teacher was supportive, students felt confident to use the language without much fear of errors. The teaching strategies, such as scaffolding of vocabulary, and structures, were found to impact learners' participation and language skills development positively.



## 7. Teaching strategies for increasing learner participation

Classroom observation revealed that some of the strategies effectively used by the teacher to increase class participation were pair and group work, questioning, eliciting, and interviewing. One of the students pointed out that: "it was encouraging and interesting to have our ideas heard by peers." Meaningful peer learning encouraged active participation in learning activities supplemented by teacher monitoring where required. The use of games and visual aids put learners at ease, creating a cooperative learning environment where they focused on the tasks. The findings indicate that the class activities grounded in these strategies increased student talk time in most classes. Also, the small class size and a supportive teacher proved conducive to promote a non-intimidating classroom atmosphere.

The data analysis of the observations indicated that when students get enough opportunities to practice the language, they acquire the language in more natural, relatable, and meaningful contexts. In the present study, real-world usage was observed to be the focal point of English language teaching. One of the observed task-based lessons was on *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Clean Indian Campaign*. It is a national campaign by the Government of India to clean the country of litter. This campaign is a trending topic of discussion on television, social media, newspapers, and the public. The learners were observed to be enthusiastic and participating actively in the discussion when the teacher introduced the topic in class. Learners were shown video clippings of the campaign. In a task, the teacher read a related newspaper article, and learners had to work on a gap-fill exercise while listening to the article. This was followed by a poster making competition depicting learners' action plans on how they can help their community and people in the neighborhood maintain cleanliness. The teacher pre-taught words, phrases, and quotations that learners could use in their posters to complete this activity.

The literature review on task-based teaching (Willis & Willis, 2007) shows that students' involvement in meaningful tasks provides opportunities to practice language skills they might need in real life. Also, the learners who actively participate in class discussions are likely to learn more than those who do not. Class participation promotes the sharing and application of knowledge. It is evident in this task-based language lesson that because students want to achieve the task outcome, they interact and create meaning that they understand. Learners can present their thoughts and opinions, and in return, receive feedback from the instructor as well as peers to assess the merits of their ideas (Jones, 2008).

To sum up, the factors discussed above encouraged learners' participation in class. The current study confirms the powerful impact of these factors on learners' progress in English language learning. The observation schedule and the learners' comments are valuable insights for me to reflect on and explore ways to increase my learners' participation.

## 8. Recommendations

In the context of the present study, it is recommended that the teacher is supportive and sensitive towards the hesitant students and provides them with

opportunities to speak in class or after class. Often, due to lack of time, they do not get a fair chance to partake in class discussions. Moreover, conventional teaching methods often contribute to low-class participation levels; therefore, learner-centred methods are required. It is important to note that since these student-centred second language acquisition teaching strategies proved efficacious in the after-school classrooms, there is no reason why they cannot be successfully practiced in conventional English language classrooms. It is also recommended that school curricula should include authentic learning opportunities that are directly tied to students' linguistic proficiency and interests.

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## Biodata

Ameena Kidwai, a teacher, trainer, and researcher, is presently teaching as an Assistant Professor at Taibah University, Madinah. KSA. In her doctoral research she has explored methodologies to make teaching and learning of English more meaningful through innovative practices. She has been associated with the Regional English Language office, U.S. Embassy and Cambridge India.

## Appendix: Tools for data collection

1. Classroom Observation Schedule: Details and the observations were noted on the given spaces for each of the observed classes, specifically, about the participation patterns of the students during the lesson (extra sheets were used, if required).

Pre-Observation Data:	Observation Data:	Pre-Activity Tasks	During-Activity Tasks:	Post-Activity Tasks:
Date Access Centre Number of Students Duration of the Class Topic Objectives Materials Used	Organization of the lesson Introduction Structuring Closure of the lesson Teacher's Time Management Allotment of the time to Activities during the lesson Conduct of Activity	Related to previous lesson Instructions	<b>Teacher</b> Explains Organizes individual/pair/group work Monitors Prompts Elicits Questions Assesses Performance	Discussion: Whole class/teacher initiated/individual student Feedback Error Correction Home Task
			<b>Students</b> Performance on Tasks Interaction patterns: Teacher — student	<b>Other Factors</b> Classroom Environment

			student — student Engagement Responses Participation	Use of Authentic Materials  Activity provided for real world English language Practice Activity provided for Different levels of learners Variety in the lesson involvement of every student Encouragement to hesitant student to perform Learners' autonomy is promoted
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2.Focused Group Discussion: The following questions were used in the discussion with each class. The discussion was recorded and transcribed in a text form later.

Do you enjoy learning in this after-school program? What has been your foremost attraction?

What new things have you learned in this course?

Do you feel that your English proficiency level has improved (understanding, reading, writing, and speaking)?

What kind of changes have you observed in yourself after joining this program? (change in media habits: reading English newspaper, watching English movies, reading English storybooks/novels)

How do you think this program is going to benefit you in the future?

Do you feel that you can use the English language more confidently now in your day to day communication?

What kind of challenges do you face while attending the program? Do the teachers of the program encourage the students to participate during the class activities?

Do you find the materials and topics used in the program interesting?

Do you like to participate in class discussions?

How important is this course to you, and is it worth attending the classes after-school?

Do the teachers encourage you to speak in English during the class?

How do you think this program can be improved to make it more beneficial for you?

# Language attitude anxiety and lack of confidence to speak English

**Asantha U. Attanayake**

Dept. of English Language Teaching, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

## 1. Introduction

The research I have carried out in four post-colonial South Asian countries - namely, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh - with over 4,500 undergraduates revealed that their most desired English language skill is speaking, despite it being not tested at examinations. However, they refrain from speaking due to a lack of confidence which stems from a fear of being ridiculed (Attanayake, 2019). This leads me to believe that language attitudes may influence post-colonial South Asian students more than the numerous well-accepted teaching methodologies for learning English. This anxiety may then be projected onto learning English in general with a negative effect on learner identities and their L2 possible selves. My work emphasizes the importance of a dialogue on language attitudes as an academic discourse as part of the remedy for Language Attitude Anxiety, in addition to building confidence to speak English as the first step in the methodology to teach English in the region.

## 2. A brief literature review

Prior to the debate of which spoken variety of English is best, it is important to recognize that some learners are inhibited by fear of ridicule when they try to speak *any* English. This leads to poor L2 possible selves which learners “are afraid of becoming” (Marcus & Nurius, 1986, p.954) and may not be the other options of possible selves: “what they might become and what they would like to become” (ibid). Even though possible selves are individualized/personalized, many of them are the direct result of previous social comparisons in which the individual's own thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and behaviors have been contrasted with those of salient others. What others are now, I could become (ibid). In line with possible self-theory, the concept of learner identity helps locate the English language learner in a context where a poor learner identity is often the result of many negative learning experiences in the classroom and discouraging language experiences

outside the classroom (Koay, 2018). Identity refers to how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how it is constructed across time and space and how the person understands possibilities for the future (Norton, 2000). A poor learner identity thus directly affects the learners in visualizing their future possibilities as limited.

The question of the variety of English arises where standard language varieties are seen to offer people access to better politico-economic-educational opportunities (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). As Giles and Rakic (2014) report, perceptions can extend to the point that those who speak better English are considered as intelligent and therefore, “it is not so much objective assessments as it is clusters of beliefs that govern social judgments of speech styles and their users” (p.12). The standards set by the mentality of elites in post-colonial South Asian societies to speak like the white work against English language learners in their efforts to speak English by causing Language Attitude Anxiety (LAA), as identified in Attanayake’s (2019) study, and that manifests in a lack of confidence to speak English hampering the desire to learn English in general in the language learner.

### 3. Objectives of the study

This study aims to examine the reasons for an observed reluctance to speak English among the undergraduates and the language attitudes of post-colonial South Asian English language learners towards English language, its fluent and non-standard variety speakers, and their influence on the English language learner. In this article, I provide an overview of the large-scale study I conducted, and then discuss some of the most important findings that emerged.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Research sample

A representative sample (Appendix 1) of major universities from each region of Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India were selected with about 1000 from each country with a minimum of 250 students from five urban/semi-urban universities. These students had relatively low proficiency levels in English and were mainly in their first or second year of study. (For more details on this process, see Attanayake, 2019.)

### 4.2. Tools

A questionnaire (Appendix 2) was administered that included Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) and an open-ended question for the respondents to comment about their English language learning experience (Appendix 3). Semi-structured interviews were conducted by a native speaker of English with 10% of the randomly selected students to check whether the fear factor to speak English was present when speaking with native speakers. The qualitative data (the *why* and *how* factors) were thematically analyzed and incorporated into *who* and *when* factors of quantitative data that was analyzed using SPSS to find out the frequencies.

4.3. Results

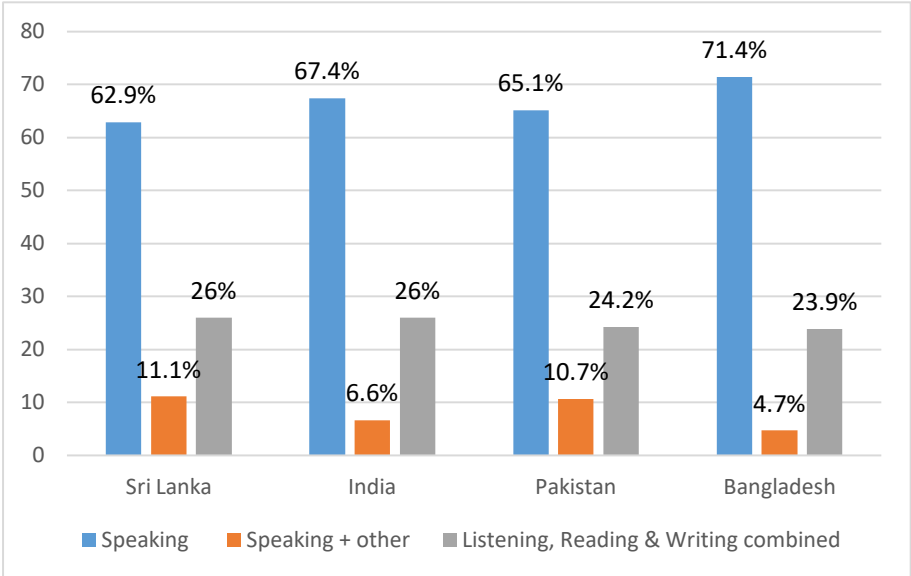


Figure 1: English language skills students desire to learn across post-colonial South Asia

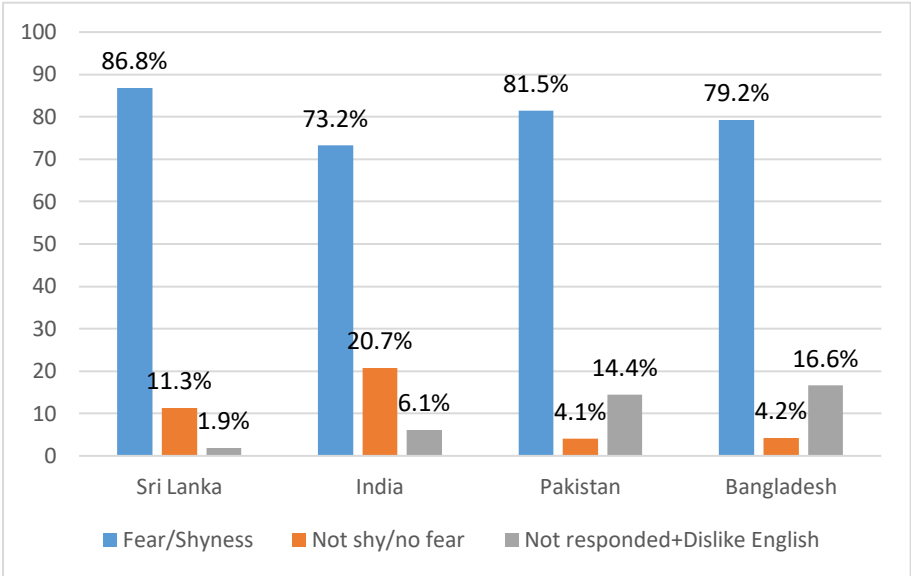


Figure 2: Reasons post-colonial South Asian students do not want to speak English

Figure 1 shows that the most desired skill among the surveyed South Asian students was speaking. All four countries have similar student percentages preferring listening, reading and writing. These are all far less than half of the

percentage which prefers speaking. The middle column shows a preference for speaking in combination with other skills.

A large majority of the students surveyed in each country are reluctant to speak English as they are either afraid, shy or both, because they believe others will laugh at their mistakes (Figure 2). This fear factor seems to lead to an aversion towards speaking English.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. The overwhelming desire to speak English

The preference for speaking English shows that the primary purpose of learning a language is for verbal communication. The examination-oriented teaching and testing approach has bypassed the primary purpose of learning a language. It also shows that the students' desire to speak, despite speech not being tested, surpasses their desire to pass examinations.

Undergraduates are also aware of the practical need for English post-graduation. They need to find a profession in a competitive market-driven society and being able to speak English is a decisive factor for obtaining a "good" job. As one Bangladeshi student revealed: "If we *good* at speak [sic] in English we will get a good job undoubtedly" as it is "the most influential language." The same idea was repeated by many others in all four countries, where being able to speak English is viewed as an instant and clear manifestation of one's suitability for a white-collar job confirming the findings of Gluszek and Dovidio (2010).

The primacy students have given to being able speak English, especially *good English*, adds another perspective to ELT discourse in South Asian societies. Students associate the ability to speak English *well* with personality traits that are strong and positive. Students state that those who are able to speak English *well* are "confident", "independent", "sure of what they do" and "are able to influence others." They believe that a fluent speaker of English is self-reliant and imply that non-Anglophones do not possess the personality traits previously mentioned.

Moreover, the ability to speak in English is viewed as a growth factor by students in all four countries: "English is needed to increase my abilities", "make me an educated person", "Speaking English develops personality", etc. Even though all these students are enrolled in higher education institutes and are considered to be highly educated, they seem to believe that being able to speak English will increase their abilities and make them truly educated.

Another aspect is that students believe that people who speak *good* English "look smart", are "stylish", "modern", "colourful", "vibrant", "amazing", "cool", "graceful" and "handsome", etc. Students seem to view spoken English as an ornament that adds something "glamorous" to their personalities. This is supported by Giles and Rakic's (2014) findings on belief-governed social judgements of speech styles and their users.

Viewing English as an instrument of power is not new. Many see it as the most powerful language and Sri Lankans call it a “weapon,” a *kaduwa* (sword) to denote its power. With its increasing value over the decades, its power remains unchanged in South Asia (Attanayake, 2019). Correspondingly, the ability to converse in English as a prestigious class-marker is a common view in the four countries as speaking in English “sets us apart in society” and allows one to look “rich” and “more refined”.

Associating English speaking ability with intelligence is common among Bangladeshi and Pakistani students. This supports the findings of Giles and Rakic (2014) on spoken variety and social judgement therein. However, students in Sri Lanka did not associate intelligence with being able to speak English. I assume this is because Sri Lanka has a high literacy rate and being able to speak English is something that sets one apart in society whose “education and family background is better” and not because he/she is more intelligent.

### 5.2. Limited/low possible selves and poor learner identities

What is alarming in this scenario is the possibility of students personalizing negative attributes assigned to people who are unable to speak English, such as having a weak personality; lack of personal growth; lack of power; and defined by poor learner identity and a limited possible self. The possible selves of the poor English language learners, in this scenario is, that of “what they are afraid of becoming.” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p.954).

Possible selves are individualized/personalized and many of them result from previous social comparisons (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The negative experiences of self and others vis-à-vis learning/speaking English can result in learners having a cautious, hands-off approach in the English language classroom (Attanayake, 2019). Arguably, the positive traits learners associated with fluent speakers of English should ideally help them develop healthy possible selves. Unfortunately, a large majority seem to relate to what they are afraid of becoming instead, namely, a subject of humiliation, as the data shows. Furthermore, “nonstandard speakers can be caricatured as downgraded relative to standard accented speakers on competence (e.g., intelligence, ambition, and confidence) as well as dynamism traits (e.g., lively, enthusiastic, and talkative)” (Giles & Rakic, 2014, p. 14).

A large majority in each country fear being ridiculed for their mistakes. As in one student’s words, his “heart beats tremendously” when he tries to speak English as others “mock at” his accent/pronunciation. This shows that the learners have had many negative experiences both in the classroom and outside, leading to poor learner identities (Koay, 2018). These views seem to have a grounding in the observations made by Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) where speakers of nonstandard language varieties face stigmatization resulting in a poor notion of self.

### 5.3. Language Attitude Anxiety (LAA)

It is apparent that learners, despite associating English with positive attributes, develop negative possible selves and poor identities because they suffer from a specific kind of anxiety that causes a lack of confidence inhibiting them from



speaking English. I call this Language Attitude Anxiety (LAA). LAA can be defined “as a complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours that affect language performance, which arise from the uniqueness of the language attitudes existing in both the larger society as well as in classroom situations” (Attanayake, 2019, p.67). Possible selves and the identities learners create vis-à-vis English language use are driven by LAA. “Language attitudes can be causing stress and anxiety that requires information management depending on the social groups targeted, methods employed, and the plethora of social contexts in which they are evoke” (Giles & Rikac 2014, p.22).

## 6. Conclusions

In post-colonial South Asia, a very high value is placed on the English language. Learner views’ captured in notably positive phrases/adjectives are clear manifestations of the existing language attitudes in their societies towards the English language and its speakers. Those who are unable to speak English are seen as having the exact opposite characteristics of those attributed to Anglophones. Unfortunately, learners develop negative possible selves and learner identities due to the inversion and personalization of these attitudes, causing them to suffer from Language Attitude Anxiety that impedes their English language learning.

In such a context, it may become of paramount importance to build confidence to speak English (with specifically designed material using Speech Act Theory and Cooperative Language Learning associated teaching methodology) to transform the regular classroom into a safe zone with no error correction or individual performance. Equally important it is to introduce a component named Language Attitudes that discusses why those who speak certain languages such as English are viewed as more prestigious and powerful in the linguistic hierarchy than those who are only mother tongue literate (Attanayake, 2019).

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## Biodata



Asantha U. Attanayake is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. She has a PhD in ELT. She is a Fulbright and a Harvard Kennedy School Executive Education alumna. Her latest book is *Post-colonial Curriculum Practices in South Asia: Building Confidence to Speak English* (2019) by Routledge.

## Appendix 1: Data collection information

The details on the data collected from the four post-colonial South Asian countries by city and the universities / colleges within each region (Attanayake, 2019, pp. 36 & 37):

Pakistan			
Administrative division	City	Name of the college/ university	No. of students
Punjab	Lahore	National University of Modern Languages, Forman Christian College, Lahore College for Women, Lahore Government College	408
	Islamabad	Air University, Iqra University	262
Sindh	Sindh	University of Sindh	209
Khyber Pakhtunkwa (formerly NWFP)	Peshawar	University of Peshawar	197
	Malakand	University of Malakand	143
Baluchistan	Quetta	Baluchistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences	99
04	06	10	1318
Bangladesh			
Administrative division/district	City	Name of the college/ university	No. of students
Barishal	Barishal	University of Barishal	169
Khulna	Khulna	University of Khulna	104
Rajashahi	Rajashahi	University of Rajashahi, Varendra University	127
Dhaka	Dhaka	University of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar University, Jagannath University	318
Chittagong	Chittagong	University of Chittagong	295
05	05	08	1013
India			
Zone	State	Name of the college/ university	No. of students
East	Odisha	Ravenshaw University, Stewart Science College, Rama Devi College, Utkal University	213
	Bengal	Presidency University, Calcutta University	88
	Varanasi	Banaras Hindu University	109
North East	Sikkim	Sikkim University, Tadong College, Rhenock College	137

	Assam	Assam University	95
West	Goa	Goa University (Dempe College & Salgaocar College of Law)	170
	Gujarat	Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and Communication Technology	31
South	Tamil Nadu	Manomaniam Sundarnar University, University of Madras	199
	Kerala	Calicut University	53
North and Central	New Delhi	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Hans raj College, Gargi College	202
05	10	20	1297
<b>Sri Lanka</b>			
<b>Province</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Name of the college/ university</b>	<b>No. of students</b>
North	Jaffna	University of Jaffna	196
West	Colombo	University of Colombo, University of Visual and Performing Arts	329
East	Battcaloa	Eastern University	167
	Ampara	South Eastern University	100
Central	Kandy	Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy	58
South	Matara	University of Ruhuna	152
05	06	07	1002

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire text and a sample response

Dear students,

We would be thankful to you, if you could kindly answer the questions given below. Your honest response will be very useful for us to develop new methodologies to teach English to our students in South Asia.

University:

Year of Study: 1<sup>st</sup> Year/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Year / 3<sup>rd</sup> Year / 4<sup>th</sup> Year

Degree programme you are following: BA / BSc / MA / Other ..... in (e.g.: History)

Medium of study: Mother tongue / English / Other

The skill you want to develop the most when you learn English

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

Other .....

Why do you want to develop it the most?

.....  
.....

Do you like to speak in English? Yes / No - Give a reason

.....  
.....

Can you speak in English well? Yes / No – Give a reason

.....  
.....

If you want to speak English but you don't speak it (or you are reluctant to speak), what are the reasons for it? Underline the response/s that suit/s you the best.

Because I fear that others may laugh at my mistakes

Because I am shy

Both (a) and (b)

Because I don't like English

I am not shy or afraid to speak English

Any other reason: .....

If you are afraid / shy to speak English, that is,

in your classroom

outside the classroom

both inside and outside classroom

nowhere (not shy or afraid anywhere)

If you are afraid / shy to speak English, that is, in front of

your teachers

your friends

outsiders

all above

no one (not shy or afraid to speak with anyone)

Write anything that you have to say about your English language learning experience or your English language speaking experience, your suggestions to improve ELT in your country, etc.

Interview Questions

Do you like to speak English?

How useful is speaking English to you? Give reasons.

Do you speak English? When? Where? With whom?

If you do not speak English, what are the reasons for that?

Tell me, how do you feel about people who speak English well?

Who do you think you are more comfortable in speaking English? With a native speaker of English (British or American) OR with your teachers, friends? Why?

Thank you,

Asantha U. Attanayake Barborich

University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

469

Dear students

We would be thankful to you, if you could kindly answer the questions given below. Your honest response will be very useful for us to develop new methodologies to teach English to our students in South Asia.

University: Forman Christian College  
 Year of Study: 1st Year  
 Degree programme you are following: BA / BSc / Other .....  
 Medium of study: Urdu / English / Other .....

- 1) The skill you want to develop the most when you learn English
  - a) Listening
  - ☒ b) Speaking
  - c) Reading
  - d) Writing
  - e) Other .....
- 2) Why do you want to develop it the most?  
I want to develop my speaking skills because I am not good at that so much.
- 3) Do you like to speak in English? Yes / No Yes
- 4) Can you speak in English well? Yes / No NO
- 5) If you want to speak English but you don't speak it, what are the reasons for it? Underline the response that suits you the best.
  - ☒ a) Because I fear that others may laugh at my mistakes
  - b) Because I am shy
  - c) Because I don't like English
  - d) Any other reason: .....
- 6) You are afraid / shy to speak English
  - a) in your classroom
  - ☒ b) outside the classroom
  - ☒ c) nowhere (not shy or afraid anywhere)
- 7) You are afraid / shy to speak English in front of
  - a) your teachers
  - b) your friends
  - ☒ c) outsiders
  - d) no one (not shy or afraid to speak with anyone)

Thank you  
 Asantha U. Attanayake Barborich  
 University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

I can speak English but I have to work on my confidence. Otherwise, it is quite easy to speak with others. Sometimes I face some troubles, so that is the other reason that I am afraid to speak in English.

# Short movie production to contribute to students' learning process in the EFL classroom: An international experience Peru-Brazil

**Roxana Carolina Perca Chagua**  
Ministerio de Educación del Perú

**Fernanda Ramos Machado**  
Instituto Federal de Santa Catarina

## 1. Introduction

This article presents a learning experience between students from two Latin American countries, Peru and Brazil, which consisted of producing a five-minute movie addressing social, political or environmental issues that are part of the context where they live. Apart from enhancing group work, oral and writing skills, the project also gave the students the chance to develop and elaborate on their technological skills and creativity.

## 2. Review of the literature

### 2.1. Language learning, critical thinking, and participatory literacy

In this project, we are aligned with sociocultural theories about language learning and support the idea that language learning is a process and is dependent on biographies, i.e., we learn certain languages, registers, styles and genres that correspond to our childhood, adolescence and adulthood and life story (Blommaert & Backus, 2011). Therefore, learners are understood as historically and sociologically situated active agents and not just information processing machines. In this line of thought, critical thinking refers to the construction of identities, languages and the site of communication (Pennycook, 2010). We are also in line with the Freirean concepts of critical pedagogy and participatory literacies (Freire, 2013). The former implies that the act of teaching is not separated from issues such as social justice and democracy. The latter, refers to reflecting and applying new learning to real-life, authentic experiences. In other words, we support the view that learning a language is not only about students understanding/reading the world they live in, but mainly transforming it. In other words, learning is about more than the acquisition of

linguistic forms, it is about learners actively developing and engaging in ways of expressing themselves through social language practices to contribute to build a world with justice, equality and diversity.

## 2.2. Project based learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is based on the ideas of Dewey, who argued that learning happens by doing rather than passively receiving, and on constructivist learning theories, which posit that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (Baş & Beyhan, 2010; Rochmahwati, 2015). According to Thomas (2000), PBL is a teaching method in which the learning process is organized around projects which

*are complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems, that involve students in design, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities; give students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time; and culminate in realistic products or presentations. ( p. 1)*

Adding to Thomas' words, Westwood (2018) states that PBL is a method in which students investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question and, in doing so, they plan, implement, and evaluate projects that have real-world applications beyond the classroom.

For the project presented in this article, the question that guided the students along its development was: How can we give voice to some social, political, economic or environmental issues through short movies so that such issues transcend the limits of the classroom?

## 3. Methodology

The main objectives of this project were to offer the students the opportunity to: a) develop autonomy over their learning process in a fun and meaningful way; b) extend the learning of English beyond the limits of the classroom; c) think critically about social/political/environmental issues that are part of their context; d) develop soft skills, such as effective communication, empathy, open-mindedness, creativity and teamwork and e) practice writing and oral skills.

### 3.1. Setting and participants

One of the settings where the project took place is the Language Center of the Jorge Basadre Grohmann National University, often known as CEID. It is located in the city of Tacna in Peru, which was the workplace of teacher Roxana Perca by the time the project was carried out in the second half of 2017. CEID is a language school with around 1,500 students of different ages. Regarding the English course, it lasts for 23 months divided into four levels: Basic (7 months), Intermediate (6 months), Upper Intermediate (6 months), and Advanced (5 months). Students attend classes



from Mondays to Fridays; these last an hour and forty minutes. Teaching adopts the communicative methodology of the *American English File* coursebook and workbook. For this project, participants were 25 students from two Intermediate level English groups aged between 14 and 25 years old.

The second setting where the project took place was the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina (IFSC) – Florianopolis Campus, located in the city of Florianopolis, in south Brazil. Florianopolis Campus integrates the IFSC network, which is a public institution that offers professional and technological qualification and education in different levels and modalities. IFSC Florianopolis Campus, specifically, offers secondary technical education as well as undergraduate programs. For this project, only students from secondary technical education participated. Regarding the teaching of the English subject specifically, students cover a total 120 hours of English language study, distributed in 3 academic semesters (40 hours each semester). The English classes happen once a week and last 1 hour 40 minutes. For this project, participants were 26 students from two Advanced level groups aged between 16 and 17 years old.

### 3.2. Project development

This project was conducted during the Spring Semester of 2017. The development of the project was organized in three phases: pre-production, production and presentation of the movies. During the pre-production phase students developed texts in the following genres: synopsis, storyboard, script and poster. The production of the different texts followed a collaborative writing process presented in Table 1 below.

Stage	Types of activity
Brainstorming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The teacher introduces the lead question: “How can we give voice to some social, political or environmental issues through short movies so that they transcend the limits of the classroom?”</li><li>- The teacher presents and explains the genre, its generic structure, and the composition of the text with examples.</li><li>- The students form workgroups with around 5-6 members for the project.</li><li>- Groups brainstorm social problems they want to focus on the movie, and chose one.</li><li>- Groups brainstorm ideas to develop the text. For example, in the case of the synopsis: characters, situation, conflict, resolution etc.</li></ul>
Drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Groups works on the draft story providing suggestions and comments towards the text and making sure it respects the number of words depending on the genre.</li></ul>
Revising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Groups revise the content, organization, discourse, syntax, vocabulary of their own texts.</li><li>- Groups swap texts to revise each other’s texts.</li><li>- Finally, the teacher revises each groups’ texts.</li></ul>
Editing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Groups revise and edit mechanics: spelling, punctuation, neatness and appearance.</li><li>- Finally, the teacher revises the edited texts.</li></ul>

**Table 1. Process writing in the Pre-production Phase.**

The collaborative work was essential in all the phases of the movie production, as you can see in the next picture that shows students working in-group to create the storyboard.



Figure 1. Students drafting the storyboard for the short movie

Once students had all the texts ready, they organized their members in a role assignation sheet. That includes characters and organization roles to start shooting the movie such as characters, cameraman, director, movie editor.

Tools	Scenarios	Types of activity
Cellphone Script Video editing program Costumes, make up Computer	Indoors: Students do this in two classes inside the language center building.  Outdoors: Student do this in locals they choose and as homework activities.	Students rehearse their roles at home. They record the scenes many times using verbal and nonverbal sources (body language, paralinguistic resources). Students use their computers to edit the video, add subtitles to the movies using programs like subtitle edit or SubtitleCreator and then present the draft to the teacher. Teacher checks and gives some suggestions.

Table 2. Production Phase

After the movie filming process, teachers and students organized a special room in their learning centers to watch the videos (three Peruvian and five Brazilian) in a short movie international festival. We present an outline of this work in Table 3, and the participants from the two countries in Figure 2.

Country	Organization
PERU Venue: a classroom of the Jorge Basadre Grohmann Language Center in Tacna. BRAZIL Venue: school auditorium at IFSC Florianopolis Campus.	Students watch the short movies from both countries during classtime. They vote for their favorite foreign movie through a paper-based method. Students write their favorite in a paper. The teacher communicates the voting result to her colleague in the other country via email. Students reflect through an oral discussion at the end of the movie festival about similarities and differences of the social problems.

Table 3. Presentation of the movies



Figure 2. Peruvian (up) and Brazilian (down) students in the Latin American movie festival

Students addressed issues such as gender inequality, parental abandonment, drugs, domestic violence, corruption, beauty standards, and gender identity. Below, we show two short movie titles and their loglines (Table 4) and two movie posters (Figure 3) presented in the *Latin American Short Movie Festival*.

Peruvian short movie	Brazilian short movie
1. <i>Juan's Bad Fortune</i> : Discontent neighbors about police inefficiency to stop crime organize themselves for justice.	1. <i>The Savior</i> An unsatisfied Brazilian elector travels back in time to change the result of the election, in hope of saving his country.

Table 4. Presentation of the movies



Figure 3. Movie posters students presented in the Latin American Short Movie Festival

4. Conclusions

In this section, we will present key aspects based on our class observation and students' opinions during the short movie festival project.

First, students engaged in the activity. They participated and collaborated with ideas, technological, linguistic and artistic skills to create the movies.

Second, students reported feeling more confident using the English language to communicate. They rehearsed their texts to perform their characters using their emotions. The students who were leading the production gave feedback to shoot the scenes the best they could. They understood that English is part of a linguistic performance in real social context, and that they need to use several resources, not just linguistic but also nonverbal and paraverbal resources.

Finally, students also reflected on the social, political and environmental issues most of them witness in the context where they live. Some students felt touched during the text production and discussed the plot summary and the script. Students and teachers alike were very impressed about how truthfully the short movies reflect

the society they live in. It was interesting to observe how students, using their imagination, proposed actions to solve the problems they all faced.

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## Biodata



Fernanda Ramos Machado holds a Masters in the field of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning and a PhD in the field of Teacher Education, both from The Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil. She has experience in the field of applied linguistics. She is currently an English teacher at the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina.



Roxana Carolina Perca Chagua holds a Licentiate in Science of Education with major in Foreign Language from Jorge Basadre Grohmann National University, Peru. She also holds a Master in Linguistics from the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil. She is currently working as a teacher at the Peruvian Ministry of Education.

# Reflections on Going Global 2020's “English Medium: During and post- COVID-19”: Takeaways for future research

Nathan Thomas and Agata Mikołajewska  
UCL Institute of Education

## 1. Introduction

The British Council's *Going Global 2020* event was originally scheduled to be an on-site conference held on 29-30 June in London. However, due to precautions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was transformed into a series of live virtual events, blog posts, and digital posters. Its theme—*Global Learners, Global Innovation*—was meant to help various stakeholders in different parts of the higher education sector share their ideas on how to improve international further and higher education for all. With live virtual panels on most weekdays during the month of June, the move online created a consistent professional development opportunity for participants worldwide, most of whom would not have been able to attend an in-person event in London. Expert panels discussed topics such as: *What is the future of higher education?*; *How do universities ensure quality teaching online?*; and *Diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education*. Needless to say, *Going Global 2020* covered quite a lot of ground. As we write this, after the last of 17 recorded panel discussions has ended, we reflect on one panel in particular that we feel holds strong implications for those in IATEFL's *ELT Research* community.

*English Medium: During and post-COVID-19* took place on 16 June and shined light on current and future impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on English medium instruction (EMI) in higher education. The event was chaired by Roy Cross of the British Council's English for Education Systems team and featured experts from the University of Edinburgh (Nicola Galloway); University of Oxford (Heath Rose & Kari Şahan); University of Bath (Reka Jablonkai); and University of Manchester (Jenna Mittelmeier). The speakers discussed potential impacts of COVID-19 at the micro/classroom level, meso/institutional level, and macro/country level. In what follows, we summarize emergent topics from the discussion and link those to what has increasingly become, but arguably not enough, a discourse of overlapping interest for researchers and practitioners in EMI and ELT.



Cross begins by introducing some implicit intertextuality to an earlier EMI event at Going Global 2014, where Ernesto Macaro, among other presenters, discussed controversies associated with EMI. One participant questioned Macaro's stance that the implementation of EMI should be research-informed and not imposed top-down without evidence to support its effectiveness. The participant mentioned the need for his university to *internationalize* within five years, leaving little time to wait for researchers to recommend best practices. And so Macaro's often-cited analogy of EMI as "an unstoppable train" which "has already left the station" was realised (Macaro, 2018, p. 12).

Six years later, at the start of the 2020 event, Cross adds that EMI is not just a train but a bullet train that has not only left the station but is now traveling at top speed; therefore, it is difficult to trace its route, exact speed, and/or whether all of the staff and passengers are prepared for the journey. These are important ideas to unpack for the seemingly elusive construct which Macaro (2018) has controversially defined as "[t]he use of English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English" (p. 1). What can be said, however, is that many similar issues can be found in the discourse describing the spread of ELT and English more generally (see Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Issues abound regarding what variety of English(es) to use in EMI, who should be teaching it, and what role English language proficiency plays for both teachers and students in EMI settings. It is therefore no surprise that in the 2018 special issue of *TESOL Quarterly*, *At the Crossroads of TESOL and English Medium Instruction*, Pecorari and Malmström (2018) call for a cross-pollination between ELT and EMI, each having insights that could potentially benefit the other. This is the perspective we take in our coverage of the event, which begins with Cross' first question:

**Q1. What was the immediate impact of the pandemic for EMI? I.e., what did universities have to do straight away to take their teaching online?**

Jablonkai begins her response by discussing obstacles to learning, highlighting how multichannel/multimodal communication has been used by many instructors to overcome communication challenges. Chat functions in many online platforms have proven invaluable during this time, as instructors are able to type anything that may be unclear much easier than would have previously been possible during a face-to-face lesson. Students are also able to utilize chat functions; slow down and/or re-watch pre-recorded lectures for better understanding; and express their feelings instantly during a lesson using just one word or an emoji in the chat.

Therefore, despite the inherent challenges, many students have reported that they understand lectures better and find communication with both teachers and other students easier. Jablonkai notes that some teachers even reported that students were more proactive during lessons by using these online features. Galloway adds that if universities are willing to adapt, the move toward pre-recorded lectures followed by online discussion, for example, could be seen as a new opportunity rather than an emergency remote teaching protocol. However, she sees

potential student dissatisfaction with online learning as a possible concern of which to be aware.

## Q2. What materials are available that may help EMI instructors cope with online teaching?

Galloway and Şahan recommend a new global network for EMI researchers and practitioners ([Teaching English and Teaching IN English in Global Contexts](#)). On this growing online space, researchers and practitioners can share materials and experiences; see how their subject is being taught in different contexts; and glean ideas for their own work. Şahan, who runs the network's webinar series describes how the webinars have evolved from an early focus on research to a new, additional focus on practitioners, by inviting instructors to share ideas in an online format.

## Q3. What might be some of the lasting consequences of the pandemic?

Şahan starts the panel's collective response by saying that the pandemic may have an impact on national EMI and language policies, and that it can affect classroom practices. She takes a positive stance on the issue by viewing this situation as an opportunity to reconsider challenges that EMI brings and rethink the pedagogical approaches applied in EMI settings. This way, the EMI community can work to overcome existing challenges (e.g. English language proficiency) as well as new challenges as they arise. She believes that online teaching can serve as a tool for developing new teaching and learning strategies to enhance students' outcomes.

Mittelmeier adds that moving classes online can be invaluable to introducing *internationalization at a distance*, stressing that people no longer have to be present physically in other destinations for an exchange of knowledge and ideas to take place. Nowadays, knowledge is mobile and, as a result, students have the opportunity to take up studies at many universities around the world without ever leaving their home countries. Thus, she expects a "big boom" of online EMI courses—a process she anticipated previously but feels may be sped up due to emergency remote teaching during the pandemic. This, in turn, may lead to increased competition between "home" and "overseas" institutions. With students having more choices, institutions in both contexts must carefully consider how they support students in EMI programs (specialized English language support is one such means); otherwise, some courses may become unsustainable.

Rose echoes this view and adds that online teaching has been largely stigmatized, and that the effects of the pandemic situation can be taken as an opportunity to lessen the stigma and utilize online platforms to their full potential. He is unsure if previously popular study abroad destinations such as the UK will continue to attract the large number of international students they have been financially relying on in recent years. This may lead to growth in both onsite EMI programs (internationalization at home) and online EMI programs (internationalization at a distance).



#### Q4. What is the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in alleviating language-related challenges in future EMI education?

Şahan states that if language is simply a barrier to overcome, then AI technology may be seen as a possible solution. However, she—rightly—argues that through EMI, many stakeholders expect English language proficiency to improve as a byproduct of studying through the medium of English, and that we must remember the need for students to be able to use English effectively without AI upon graduation. Galloway affirms this point by reminding listeners that the aims of EMI vary in different contexts. In some contexts, EMI is closely aligned with incidental language learning, while in other contexts, the purpose is more closely related to content knowledge development; practitioners must strike a careful balance to ensure these aims are met.

#### Q5. Moving forward, where should the focus of research be?

The panel's final remarks can be summarized as such: 1) building on the extensive research currently available on challenges in implementing EMI (often language related) future research could focus on how best to mitigate these challenges in specific contexts; 2) best practices in terms of strategic support for students; 3) multidisciplinary and comparative research on the effect of the medium of instruction on learning outcomes; and 4) how best to build diverse and inclusive programs in higher education.

To sum up, it is important to remember that with the start of the pandemic we bid farewell to the old normal and have been forming what could potentially be “new normals” within both EMI and ELT. In reflecting on the discussants' shared experiences, we see an even stronger need for EMI and ELT researchers and practitioners to come together. As Thompson and McKinley (2018) note, there is no shortage of teaching approaches that have emerged in recent decades that call upon some degree of content and language integration, such as content-based instruction (CBI), content-based language teaching (CBLT), and content and language integrated learning (CLIL). And while EMI does not typically have the same dual pedagogical focus on content and language, there is an implicit dual-aimed outcome in that both content knowledge and English language proficiency will develop as a result of EMI. However, “many students still need language support in order to study the content effectively” (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 196); researchers and practitioners on the ELT side may be able to provide insight, assistance, and/or relevant empirical findings to help provide the English language support that is needed. As Pun and Thomas (2020) note, although we live in our own immediate realities that differ among contexts, we must continue to strive for an idealized reality where content and language experts work in collaboration for the betterment of all stakeholders involved.

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## Biodata

Nathan Thomas is a postgraduate researcher at the UCL Institute of Education. He is mainly interested in language learning strategies, self-/other-regulation, and EMI. He has published in leading academic journals such as *Applied Linguistics*, *Applied Linguistics Review*, *ELT Journal*, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *Language Teaching*, *System*, and *TESOL Quarterly*.

Agata Mikołajewska is a postgraduate researcher at the UCL Institute of Education. Her current work focuses on internationalisation and English medium instruction in Polish tertiary education. She earned her MSc Education (Research Training) from the University of Oxford. Her recent publications appear in *Higher Education* and *Studies in Higher Education*.

# Researching teaching practice: Critical reflections on enhancing robustness of qualitative studies

**Dr Robbie Lee Sabnani**

National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

## 1. Introduction

This paper presents my critical reflections on conducting qualitative research through a collective case study (Yin, 2009). It shares the guiding principles adopted in the study and discusses the significance of ensuring trustworthiness, with an analysis of the measures adopted to ensure the robustness of the study. I examine the implications of considering credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to throw light on classroom research and inform teacher education.

Credibility illuminates the value of a study, and the extent to which the findings are believable. Dependability reflects the reliability of the inquiry and the consistency with which the data is analysed. Confirmability of findings is cemented through deliberate and consistent checking of interpretations with the study's participants to ensure their accuracy. Finally, transferability is strengthened through its rich description of the context, methodology and analytical processes, to help readers make informed decisions about applying the findings of the study to their own future work.

This article offers insights into the nuanced processes involved in conducting a case study, and can be useful to academics, students and practitioners interested in teacher education research. Additionally, it presents possibilities for situating classroom-derived data in pedagogical instruction, and in so doing, strengthen the link between theory and practice for English language teaching in varied contexts.

## 2. Qualitative research approach: Case study

The objective of this study was to examine teachers' beliefs for speaking instruction. The case study approach was deployed to gain an understanding of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices to develop students' oral English competence. Specifically, the study sought to examine (a) the content of teachers' beliefs for the teaching of speaking to young second language learners, and (b) how their beliefs were enacted in their classroom instructional practices.

I identified case study as the methodology of choice for its strengths in providing comprehensive descriptions of a complex issue situated within the teachers' authentic contexts (Dörnyei, 2007). In this connection, it offers rich perspectives to examine varied facets of the issue, and how they interact with each other to unfold teachers' beliefs. Guided by my objectives to identify similarities and differences across a selection of teachers, this inquiry comprised three experienced English language teachers, each identified as a case study.

### 3. Participants

Acknowledging the active role of teachers in enacting their thoughts about teaching and learning in their day-to-day practices, this collective case study comprised three teacher participants as individual cases. I adapted Palmer, Stough, Burdenski and Gonzales' (2005) expertise criteria to identify three teachers for the study as:

- Trained as a qualified teacher by Singapore's National Institute of Education's initial teacher preparation programmes
- At least 5 years of experience in the teaching of English in a Singapore Primary School and
- Nominated by the school principal as mentor teacher / cooperating teacher for English language or school for strengths in the teaching of English

In this study, the teachers have completed teacher training. Although the criteria for selection is 5 years of experience, they each had more than 10 years' experience developing young learners' English skills and were nominated by their school principals for the study.

### 4. Composition of a collective case study

The participant composition of the collective case study in this research is defined as a study comprising multiple cases, identified based on the above specific selection criteria and studied in their respective contexts. Examining the three teachers allowed for inter-case as well as cross-case analyses to strengthen the robustness of the study.

I therefore selected the three experienced teachers with English expertise as collective cases to provide sufficient opportunities for comparison, across a purposefully selected range of teachers (Yin, 2009). I was mindful not to include more teachers as doing so may not have afforded the study sufficient depth, due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts. As the intent of the study was not to generalise the findings, this configuration of three cases would provide the requisite depth and breadth for a rich description of the case contexts and offer a vivid description of their beliefs and practices for speaking instruction.

## 5. Data collection and analysis

I deployed multiple modes of data collection to triangulate information from different lines of investigation (Yin, 2009). These included lesson observations, interviews, my researcher's notes as well as the examination of artefacts. The research design enabled me to tap perspectives from the classroom observations and one-on-one semi-structured interviews with teachers, all transcribed verbatim. I complemented the information gathered with thick contextual descriptions from my notes, compiled over the course of approximately one school year.

Together, the data collection avenues comprehensively captured the aspects examined (Dörnyei, 2007). In total, the study involved 36 lesson observations, 9 semi-structured interviews and 9 post lesson discussions. The time span of the data collection represented a high percentage of the teachers' English lessons for the period studied, both in terms of the frequency of the observations and interviews as well as the duration of each session. This sustained period helped teachers to be comfortable with the lesson observations and one-on-one discussions, and to this end, enabled the surfacing of their authentic behaviours. Details of the data collection modes are given Table 1:

Teacher	Classroom observations	Interviews	Post Lesson observation discussions
A	12	3	3
B	16	3	5
C	8	3	1

**Table 1. Data collection summary**

### Notes

Classroom observations: 30-90 minutes / session

Interviews: 45-60 minutes / session

Post lesson observation discussions: 20-30 minutes / session

## 6. Measures to ensure trustworthiness

The design of the inquiry in which I helped teachers to unpack their beliefs was inherently introspective. The success of the study depended on the accurate identification and depiction of teachers' beliefs about the teaching of speaking. To understand their rationales, I asked them in the semi-structured interviews about the formation of their beliefs and how they had evolved in the course of their lives. I focused on significant influences such as their schooling, personal and professional experiences, which Borg (2006) describes as elements and processes in teacher cognition, to help them identify milestone events that may have shaped their beliefs and ways of being. For example, in thinking about their own experiences as students, specifically, how they were taught in school, and reflecting on how similar or different their own practices were from their teachers'. I also inquired on instances in their lives that had an impact on the way they think about their practice (e.g., if they taught in a particular way because of their previous personal or professional experience, or in a different manner, as a result of less favourable experiences etched in their memories). To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the measures

adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985) to raise the credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of the findings are outlined below.

### 6.1. Credibility

Credibility speaks to the degree that research findings are reasonably interpreted, based on all the available factors and constraints present. To enhance the integrity of the study, I first read through each transcript carefully to identify the broad themes. I then highlighted sections of the text and represented them by words or phrases (“codes”), informed by the literature on teacher cognition (Borg, 2006) and speaking development (Goh & Burns, 2012). I similarly applied this manner of ascribing codes across all the transcripts, with the codes generated from earlier transcripts serving as guides for the subsequent ones, and new codes reapplied to earlier transcripts to ensure that they remained relevant. This process of moving back and forth across and within transcripts enabled me to compare and contrast the emergent codes across the three teachers’ interviews and classroom observations. Additionally, it allowed me to examine the codes surfacing from each teacher from the data collected at different points of the study to strengthen the rigour in generating the themes.

### 6.2. Dependability

Dependability of the study was addressed by adopting steps to ensure the consistency of the codes generated from the transcripts. To do so, I invited an independent coder, another researcher from my academic group, to code a representative sample of the data. I first briefed him of the steps I had adopted in the coding process and explained the definitions for each identified code. Next, we compared the samples we had independently coded. We discussed the differences and where appropriate, refined the codes after conferring with each other. The high inter-coder agreement reflected that codes generated from the second independent level check were largely in agreement with the original set of codes, attesting to the dependability of the analysis.

### 6.3. Confirmability

Confirmability of the study involved *member checking*, which involves validation of the emergent findings from the data with the individual cases. In this connection, I went back to each of the three teachers to check that their voices were accurately reflected, and that the data collected from the lesson observations and interviews had been accurately interpreted. This was possible because the study had been designed with avenues available for me to have short meetings with the teachers following the lesson observations – to seek clarifications, and just as importantly, to provide opportunities for the teachers to talk about their classroom actions.

### 6.4. Transferability

To mitigate the interpretative elements present in qualitative research such as this case study, I ensured that I provided a thick account of the context, by

conscientiously penning down in-depth descriptions in my researcher's notes. The notes offered a view into the lesson observations and interviews by portraying the teachers and depicting the environments in which the events were unfolding. For example, I described the layout of the classrooms, such as the placement of the teachers' desks in relation to the students' seats, as well as the seating arrangement of the students – tables in collaborative formation, arranged singly or in pairs/threes. Additionally, the entries captured the voice qualities demonstrated in the classroom interactions as well as the contexts in the different classes to encourage speaking. These comprehensive accounts would be helpful in giving readers - including teachers, students or researchers - a holistic understanding of the context if they were considering possible similar work.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper provides insights into the actions for a robust qualitative research study. Specifically, it depicts the measures adopted to deepen the value of the findings of this inquiry of teacher beliefs and practices. Enhancing the trustworthiness measures enabled the identification and description of teachers' beliefs and classroom actions. Concerted efforts to ensure credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability strengthened the interpretation of findings on what teachers believe and how they enact their practices for the teaching of speaking.

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## Biodata



Dr Robbie Lee Sabnani is a language teacher educator. Her interests include speaking and listening, metacognition and the development of teacher expertise. She teaches a range of courses in the areas of Professional English, Pronunciation, Communication Skills and Multicultural Studies at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

# IATEFL ReSIG online discussion: Practitioner Research as a principled framework for continuing professional development for English language teachers

Assia Slimani-Rolls & Chris Banister  
Regent's University London

## 1. Introduction

In February 2019, the IATEFL ReSIG hosted an online discussion entitled *Practitioner Research (PR) as a principled framework for continuing professional development (CPD) for English language teachers*. CPD is a topic of considerable importance in language education, particularly in higher education, where it is reflected in the institutional demands for teacher development. Engaging in research and scholarship is acknowledged by many as having a potentially powerful and transformative force upon the professional development of teachers. Hence, the investment by many in-service language teachers in their on-going development; through engaging in various forms of PR in the search for better understanding their classroom practice, they remain relevant and responsive to the needs of their own advancement and those of their institutions.

In this article, Assia Slimani-Rolls and Chris Banister of Regent's University London, two of the moderators of this ReSIG Online Discussion, which attracted teacher educators, researchers, teachers, and teacher practitioners from across the world, reflect on how the event shed further light on PR as a principled framework for CPD for language teachers. The event was inspired by a publication co-authored by Assia Slimani-Rolls (Slimani-Rolls & Kiely, 2018) on the same theme. This volume featured six language teachers' narratives about the experiences they lived during a longitudinal project in which they were mentored by the co-authors and which enabled them to implement a form of PR, Exploratory Practice (EP), in their classrooms. Chris Banister, the ReSIG Online Discussion Board Moderator at the time of the discussion, was one of the teachers who contributed a chapter to this publication.

There were three phases to this online event and each phase posed a series of questions for participants. The questions were all prompted by key themes and issues discussed in Slimani-Rolls and Kiely (2018). In this



short article, we summarise and discuss some of the participants' responses and reflect on the insights that were shared.

## **2. Beyond teacher-teacher collaboration**

Phase one asked participants: How can collaborative research involve collaboration with students rather than teacher colleagues and non-teaching research colleagues? One contributor, working in a Japanese context, agreed that there were opportunities for learners to be involved beyond their traditional role as a source of data collection. He also suggested that he was on the verge of embarking on a collaborative teacher-student research journey with his students. Other discussion participants from India, South America and the UK pointed out the clear opportunities they envisioned for collaboration between teachers and their learners. Teachers and teacher-researchers shared their successes with PR frameworks such as Action Research (AR) and EP to conduct collaborative research with their learners. Melissa Reed, working in an Australian context, stressed the collaborative value she saw in asking her learners for feedback as part of AR cycles. Meanwhile, Yasmin Dar, based in the UK, explained how she had involved not only her learners, but also her line manager as part of a collaborative approach combining CPD, lesson observation and EP.

Key themes that emerged here were the positive signal that involving learners in setting and exploring PR agendas can send out and how this can inspire a virtuous cycle of positive affect-building amongst practitioners. Yasmin Dar, based in the UK, revealed that demonstrating her respect for her learners by involving them in her PR was a major part of EP's appeal. Richard Kiely, of the University of Southampton, and co-author of the volume on EP and CPD, picked up on this theme. Richard saw Yasmin's comments mirrored in the case studies from the book in which learners, asked about being involved in research, expressed feelings of pride in being positioned as mature in the eyes of their teacher. Responding to a regular contributor based in eastern Bulgaria, Richard agreed that viewing learners as "responsible agents" with "real and unpredictable contributions" to make was a stance that EP shared with the Freinet approaches to pedagogy from ELT's recent past (see Templar, 2014 for more details on Freinet). Assia Slimani-Rolls closed this phase of the discussion by stressing that the types of collaborative research discussed were all part of practitioners harnessing their community, opening communication channels and constructing their knowledge.

## **3. EP is a motivating force behind practitioner research**

Phase two asked for participants' views about which dimensions shaped teachers' motivation and sustainable engagement in PR. This enquiry triggered various reactions from participants working in differing professional contexts. Some UK participants focused on the ethical, collegial and professional dimensions that have enriched their lived experiences and those of their students and peers. Yasmin highlighted EP's ethical approach to research, which kept her motivated and engaged her and her students in EP. To Ana Salvi, EP fulfils the aim of education,

which she sees as essentially “creating space and time for students to explore their questions and doubts” in order to become aware of the constructive nature of knowledge and understand how this is mutually developed. Adding to these dimensions, Chris Banister highlighted some of the gratifying experiences that he lived when collaborating with experienced researchers: the “enjoyment and personal satisfaction” derived from the EP way of being in the classroom and the emerging “researcher identity” that he felt had regenerated his professional life following the public dissemination of his understandings. The above EP espoused attitudes represent a stark difference with the sociocultural dimensions that characterise the reactions of Maria Rodrimora (Argentina), Jani Reddy (India) and Elizabeth Bekes (Ecuador). Maria “envied” those privileged teachers who have the possibility of working with research committed colleagues and asserted that much work is needed to achieve such opportunities in her country. Absent in Jani’s context, mentoring was stressed as crucial to inspire neophyte teacher researchers and empower them to make their work public. Elizabeth, a dedicated Exploratory Action Research practitioner, welcomed PR in teachers’ lives but remarked that, in many parts of the world, PR is only in the realm of the privileged few, drawing attention to the “huge mismatch between expectations, requirements, and reality”. The thrust of phase two of the discussion was that engagement in the search for understanding their classroom practice could, indeed, become a motivating force if teachers’ efforts were systematically included in CPD.

#### 4. Relevance of the work context

Phase three enquired about the roles played by work context and work conditions and the role played by institutional frameworks to encourage and sustain EP, PR and teacher learning. The general consensus was that teachers’ difficult working conditions are only some of the barriers that prevent PR activities. Familiar with India’s primary and secondary sectors, Jani commented on the scarcity of PR presence in these sectors and added that although their 2005 National Curriculum Framework professes the teacher’s role as “reflective practitioner”, scant support is given to the development of this vision. The absence of PR was further highlighted in a different professional context by Michelle Hunter, a German-based freelance business English teacher, explaining that her calls for developing CPD and mentoring activities have remained unanswered by her colleagues whose contractual obligations make extracurricular activities unviable.

Without support, establishing teaching associations (TAs) would be arduous remarked Elizabeth (Ecuador), whose country’s TA, she said, is “dormant”. To this, Bill Temper (Bulgaria) responded that this situation is, in varying degrees, omnipresent in many countries like Bulgaria where TA membership is dwindling and, in Germany, where there is no national TA. He focussed on the need for ministries of education to support some sectors and perhaps subsidise TA membership, TA workshops and encouraging PR in schools. Although Bill sees IATEFL membership and their annual conference fees as prohibitively high for many, he praised the

exemplary role played by the ReSIG books in their attempts to facilitate PR practice and hoped that similar work could be encouraged by the IATEFL TA associates.

In support for a substantial collaboration involving all concerned, another UK-based participant Cliff Kast stressed that when so many stakeholders are involved in the negotiation of a better deal for teachers, most end up “tending their own patches”. For a start, he praised access to precisely the type of online communication organised by ReSIG for how it helps bring together practitioners and researchers. Furthermore, he highlighted the creation of journals such as the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes (JEAP)* which promotes teaching practice as knowledge creation to enhance the interest in PR and the respect that needs to be given to PR. In this regard, Jani highlighted the efforts that some Indian universities and educational foundations such as Azim Prem Ji had made to sensitise teacher engagement in PR and publish their research outcomes. Back in the UK, Yasmin endorsed her university’s assistance in sponsoring staff’s PR engagement. Similarly, Richard Kiely reminded the participants that the book under discussion describes precisely such an initiative where the policy of the institution was matched with resources, especially time for meetings and mentoring.

It was fascinating to note the diversity of responses to the question of collaborative PR, whether it is learners feeding back on PR as reviewers or learners taking on a fuller role by setting their own research agendas. With hindsight, however, these assertions represented a dissonance with our own experience of running the EP project which led to the book under discussion. To start with, the teachers’ consideration of the learners as co-partners in the research enterprise took a while to take off. Indeed, as expressed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017), it was a matter of “re-position[ing] those who have been objects of research into questioners, critics, theorists, knowers, and communicators” (p.188). These shifts of identity posed a significant epistemological challenge to their reality. It took time, much mentoring and extensive group discussions with experienced researchers, before the teacher-researchers deployed their creative capacity to adopt their students as co-partners. Nevertheless, what was most interesting during the discussion was the idea of the important message sent out by collaborative PR. Such endeavours make more visible teachers’ positive beliefs about and attitudes towards learners and their perspectives that might ultimately go beyond learners themselves and be noticed and picked up by other key institutional stakeholders, too, such as parents and administrators.

The contributions of the many keen practitioner-researchers to this online discussion testified to the fact that PR is not common practice across the world and language teachers share similar difficult working conditions. Indeed, heavy workloads and lack of resources including trivialisation of their profession and lack of respect for their investigative efforts are all live issues. The difference, however, is that their discussion is more visible in conferences and in many recent publications. Notwithstanding this, it can also be said that discussions have been ongoing since the teacher research movement in the 60s and 70s (Stenhouse, 1975). Nevertheless, as acknowledged by some of the participants, IATEFL ReSIG and its

associated teachers have done much work towards raising the profile of PR and facilitating its practice in Africa, Australia, India, Latin America, Turkey, UK and elsewhere (Bullock & Smith, 2015; Burns, 2010; Dikilitaş & Hanks, 2018; Smith, 2015). This development is not exclusive to IATEFL; the British Educational Research Association also has an active PR ReSIG. Yet, perhaps, more influential than this commendable and often inspiring activity has been the call for research by UK universities which has made research part of many university teachers' contracts to engage in scholarship and research. This is clearly illustrated by the six language practitioners in Slimani-Rolls and Kiely (2018) whose university sustained their efforts to engage in PR and whose narratives attest to the profound impact that their CPD using EP has had on their professional lives.

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# Mentoring Ecuadorian university teachers and students in the collaborative write-up phase of their Exploratory Action Research

Erzsébet Ágnes Békés

National University of Education, Ecuador

## 1. Introduction

Mentoring the writing up process of teacher-researchers who are inexperienced in classroom research is a challenging task because their needs are usually multidimensional. Dikilitaş and Mumford (2016) describe several types of support that may be provided by mentors to novice authors, such as sharing research expertise, supplying feedback on appropriate language use, and setting achievable goals. In our case, the researchers envisaged the dissemination of our findings in conference proceedings. Owing to the unprecedented circumstances that evolved in early 2020 in Ecuador due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we couldn't resort to sharing the results of the research projects in this manner because the university's first ever ELT conference scheduled for July 2020 was cancelled and with it vanished the 'in-house' publishing opportunity. We decided to aim higher.

My mentoring role involved facilitating and scaffolding the development of emerging teacher-researchers / novice research writers, who were going through an 'apprenticeship' (Hyland, 2012, p. 61) experience. I also acted as a co-author of one of the two articles after a teacher-researcher pulled out from the write-up phase. Furthermore, my mentorship included the organizational role (Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2016) of thoroughly exploring the publishing outlets open to novice authors (Renandya, 2014). I had some experience in this regard owing to an academic writing and publishing project (Orosz, Carrasco, Jaramillo, & Békés, 2019), which was perceived a success, because over an 18-month period five of the nine participants eventually published academic-level texts in reputable ELT publications.

The writing up process is inevitably more complex when it is carried out collaboratively. Dikilitaş and Mumford (2016) stress that "collaborative writing implies a sensitivity to others' way of working, and a commitment to sharing work in the face of differences in language skills, research experience, and background" (pp. 379–380). The co-authors, namely, my teacher-researcher mentees, all worked at the same university and had a great deal of sensitivity and commitment but less experience in creating publishable products.

## 2. The original project and its adaptation under lockdown

The Action Research Mentoring project started in December 2019 at the National University of Education, Ecuador (UNAE). The aim was to support classroom research carried out by the English teacher educators working there and, simultaneously, to enhance these teacher educators' mentoring skills in supporting their own students' action research projects. The programme was open to students as well, so altogether 11 teacher-researchers and five English major student-researchers took part in the initial stages of the project. One of the teachers (the on-campus coordinator) also acted as an emerging co-mentor. The sessions were based on Smith and Rebolledo's *A handbook for Exploratory Action Research* (2018) and Smith's *Mentoring teachers to research their classrooms* (2020).

Back in March 2020, these teacher- and student-researcher mentees were still awaiting the arrival of the new cohort of students in order to start the planned interventions, but owing to the lockdown resulting from the pandemic, the new semester was severely delayed and the teachers also needed to swiftly switch to online instruction. With no incoming students for at least another two months and no face-to-face classes in sight, continuing the action research project in its original form seemed unworkable.

In the initial mentoring project, a group of teacher- and student-researchers intended to examine vocabulary acquisition, namely, the puzzle of why students find remembering and retrieving new words difficult. Thus, when an opportunity to register for an international online vocabulary learning tournament arose at the end of March 2020, four teacher-researchers and three student-researchers (with two teachers and two students from the original group) decided to sign up. The use of an online application called WordEngine was related to the initial work of the vocabulary research group since they were hypothesising that online vocabulary tools might be appealing to their students, who are often described as 'millennial digital natives'. Therefore, the tournament offered an opportunity not just to compete but also to examine more deeply the contestants' own strategies for vocabulary acquisition using an online tool. The data gathered included reflective vocabulary journals, WhatsApp messages exchanged in the team, final reflections and statistics on the number of newly learnt words by each contestant.

The team called UNAE 593 won the competition and was awarded almost 3000 free accounts for all members of the university to use the online application for a whole year. Once the four-week tournament was over, the analysis of the data began and by mid-June 2020 three written submissions were shaping up: an article on vocabulary acquisition strategies for *Asian Journal of English Language Studies* (AJELS), another on cooperative vocabulary learning for *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (AJAL), and a guest blog post summarizing the students' experience for IATEFL's Learning Technologies SIG (see Notes for these references).

## 3. Collaborative research writing under lockdown

The losses that the initial mentoring project suffered as a result of the double blow of the economic and health crisis in Ecuador were considerable: eight of the

original 11 teacher-researchers (including my co-mentor) left the project owing to redundancies, salary cuts, teaching overload and the switch to online delivery from one day to another. All release time for research was withdrawn. At this point, I had to judge how much more effort I could expect of my mentees (including those three who joined us for the WordEngine project) in order for them to accomplish the writing up process under the much-worsened circumstances.

It was essential that we used our time and effort effectively. Before we started writing, we needed to take stock of 'what's in the fridge'. This was something I often repeated to my mentees when they suggested reading yet another article or book. "We are not going shopping," was my reply, which took on added poignancy under the lockdown. We started with careful and detailed planning of the articles down to the allocation of the number of words to each section. We brainstormed the ideas, decided who is going to be responsible for which section and started reading. This included perusing sample articles and biodata from the targeted journals.

The feedback I was given after finishing the write-up showed that this structured approach was deemed helpful: *"Eli has guided us so carefully. She has taken the time to prepare the whole distribution of the article. I feel that having everything more organized helps me to control my ideas and to use my time properly."* (T3).

As it happens, we had teachers among the co-authors who had written their theses about related topics (cooperative learning) and we could rely on their previous knowledge. I also approached eminent authors and asked for their opinion on issues that came up (Sarah Mercer and Norbert Schmitt were gracious enough to enlighten us regarding social motivation and a specific vocabulary determination strategy). This was a way to show my mentees that you should aim high, and you will be pleasantly surprised by how obliging more experienced peers often are. The move was not lost on my mentees: *"I learned that I should not be scared of contacting the big authors, attending their online conferences or asking them if I have doubts (like you did with Schmitt)."* (T1).

#### 4. Collaborative research writing and language work

It was important to make sure that the emerging voices of the aspiring non-native speaker teacher- and student-researchers could be retained while acknowledging the need to accommodate the conventions of academic discourse.

Initially, I focused on the contributions that my mentees were able to offer *content-wise*: their meticulous processing of the data, their insights into what those data represented, and the concepts that they formulated when working with each other. Improving academic writing was among the aspirations, but first we wanted to get closer to scholarly writing as "situated practice" (Hyland, 2012, p. 60), i.e., combine the rhetorical structures of the genre (action research report) with the social context in which the texts were generated.

The specific language work consisted of multiple rounds of editing. It involved looking at the drafts for coherence and cohesion as well as fine-tuning the novice authors' academic writing. The application of clear and concise sentence structure as well as the precise use of terminology were encouraged in order to approximate

academic publishing standards. The teacher-researchers later stated that my sincere comments and patient guidance supported their learning:

*“The feedback that you provided had a nice comment, but you were also honest about the kind of information that needed to be modified, changed or improved.” (T1)*

*“I have learned a lot by observing my co-worker's parts and writing style, and especially from Eli that has guided us patiently through this process.” (T4)*

We also made a serious effort to involve our student-researchers: three of them were in the competing team, and after the tournament we worked together on writing up their experience. My aim was to guide them in the process of writing to a specific genre (guest blog post). In their case, it was important to narrow the gap between the website manager's content- and style-specific requirements and the A2-B2 level writing skills of the students. Their feedback reflects how they perceived this part of the mentoring process, namely, being encouraged to improve the text rather than the mentor offering ready-made solutions:

*“Eli as mentor always was telling for us how to write. She was very patient with all of us but the most interesting in her was when she was correcting our writing. She never corrected it herself, but she let us learn from our mistakes.” (S3)*

*“After every feedback we were given for the blog, I could feel that the quality of the blog went up notably.” (S2)*

## 5. Informal external feedback before submission

Before submitting the manuscripts, we asked for informal feedback from corpus analysis expert Charles Browne, ex-AJAL editor Darío Banegas, and our lead mentor Kenan Dikilitaş; their comments led to much-improved new drafts. I felt that modelling how you handle well-justified criticism was crucial for long-term learning. This meant demonstrating to my mentees how to judiciously consider each and every comment and, if required, change course and even re-design the route. Banegas, for example, pointed out that some of the sources that we referred to in the manuscript were not considered to be ‘academic enough’ and Dikilitaş had concerns about the prominence that we had given to cooperative learning and teamwork with less attention paid to the exploration of vocabulary acquisition strategies.

## 6. Reflection on my mentoring practice

As an emerging mentor (Békés, 2020), I learnt a lot about several aspects of how the writing up process by novice writers can be facilitated. As co-creators, we aimed



at striking the right balance between individual authorship and teamwork. The workload might have been allocated more equitably and the timeline extended so that everyone could 'savour' the experience. One of the teacher-researchers, who spent a lot of time on developing a certain section that was ultimately not included in their article, was clearly dissatisfied:

*"I feel a little disappointed. We have worked really hard on certain parts of the article; however, I feel that since many things were changed and because of the time we couldn't be involved too much. I still think it is a great article." (T4)*

Altogether, I received written, anonymous feedback from seven of the eight participants: some of them had made notes after each mentoring session, others reflected at the end of the process, after the students' guest blog post on their experience was published on IATEFL's Learning Technology website and the two journal articles were also submitted.

On the whole, the participants were appreciative of the mentoring process, the clearest sign of which is that the student-researchers started working on a new action research project very soon after the one described here was accomplished, and I began mentoring four teacher-researchers in a project that involves writing book reviews for indexed journals.

## 7. Conclusion

Mentoring student- and teacher-researchers in the writing up process of their action research projects is intense but also highly rewarding. Under the unprecedented conditions of COVID-19, my mentees and I had to swim or sink, and we went for the butterfly stroke. In the absence of face-to-face classes, we harnessed an opportunity to carry on researching and dove deeper into our own vocabulary learning strategies.

Altogether, making a strenuous effort to disseminate the results of our experience by writing them up served many of the purposes that are listed in Smith (2020); first and foremost, it provided "a motivating goal, and a satisfying end" (p. 68). Except it's not the end...

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### Notes

The mentees' journal articles and guest blog post have recently been published, and the details of these publications are as follows:

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### Biodata

Erzsébet Ágnes Békés is a Hungarian English teacher residing in Ecuador. She taught English as a volunteer in Greece, Ethiopia and the Amazonian jungle. She is currently working as a teacher-research mentor at the National University of Education, Ecuador. Email: [ebekes@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ebekes@yahoo.co.uk)



# MA ELT Quick Fire Presentation Event – A reflective report

**Bronwyn Latham**  
Cardiff University

Writing and producing an MA Dissertation is a unique experience. While undergraduate students have a summer break and university buildings lay dormant, postgraduates are working on their own individual research, influenced by their life experiences, interests, and what inspired them to study in the first place.

A few weeks into beginning research for my own dissertation, my supervisor emailed me with the link to this event by the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group (ReSIG). They suggested that it would be beneficial to network with like-minded people, and it would be an opportunity to share my research with a wider audience. This was eventually echoed on the day of the event by organiser, Tilly Harrison, Associate Professor at the University of Warwick. She explained her aim was to create a space where we, as budding researchers, could present our hard work in a supportive environment, beyond the dusty shelves of our respective supervisors.

The Quick Fire Event, named for its focus on 5-minute PowerPoint presentations on research related to English Language Teaching (ELT), is organised by Tilly Harrison and Ana Inés Salvi every year. Normally it is a day-long conference held at the University of Warwick, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a face-to-face event was not possible in 2020.

I submitted a presentation for approval, as I am passionate about my area of research. My dissertation is titled “Simulating Simulations: Perceiving how Global Simulations can be a feasible tool for Second Language Learning”, where I aim to use the perceptions of teachers to evaluate how a Global Simulation can operate in this context. I was interested in attending regardless, as I taught English as a Second Language (ESL) for a year in Bilbao. The fact that I have learned a second language and taught a second language has rounded my perspective, but language and teaching is evolving and changing all the time.

I was privileged to be accepted to present my dissertation. As students, we were no strangers to the whole host of online platforms available, and holding the event on Adobe Connect meant that we were joined by people from all over the world. Although the event started at 9:30am BST on Tuesday 4 August 2020, people from Australia, China and Singapore also attended, even though it was an evening conference for them.

In terms of research itself, it is clear that the repercussions of COVID-19 indicate that research into ELT is more prevalent than ever. With classes transitioning online, it held relevance to my research and impacted others'. Even before the pandemic, it had been established that a teacher's support involves more than just being present (Hongxia et al., 2018, p. 139), which demonstrates the need to revisit their role to maximise what they can do for students. The pandemic had definitely added a plot twist to my dissertation. I had been working from my bedroom, socially distanced, since March, and it was refreshing to be pulled away from the future of teaching to be reminded of the present.

There was no set theme when submitting a proposal, but on the day the 12 presentations were organised thematically. Topics discussed included teacher beliefs, feedback analysis, learning strategies, written and oral communication, and ELT resources. Dissertations are deceptively non-linear when it comes to writing them, so we were all at different stages in our research. However, it was as if everyone had been studying their particular field for years.

Before commencing, a discussion question was introduced, and we were separated into breakout rooms (smaller chat rooms away from the main meeting). Naturally, we were asked about how we managed writing a dissertation during a pandemic. My group was able to draw upon the opportunities social distancing gave us instead of dwelling on the negatives. The only major disadvantage we discussed was the lack of resources we could access for secondary research, as we were only able to use our respective university's online libraries. Positives mostly revolved around the newfound time we had thanks to the furlough scheme and the lack of a commute to campus. However, Jessica Mackay, committee member of IATEFL Research SIG, pointed out that COVID-19 has impacted research output. She explained that in many cases, women have been undertaking additional domestic and childcare duties alongside their research commitments. Men, like some of us dissertation students it seems, have often been able to use the luxury of commuting freedom to channel into their respective research, increasing their output. This is supported by a recent study where the workload of men and women was compared during the COVID-19 lockdown. The study found that women are less likely to be able to do work, as they are more likely to be interrupted by their children or domestic duties (Andrew et al., 2020, p. 19).

The event was timed to the minute, holding true to the "quick fire" name. Each presenter was given five minutes to deliver their research, and then the participants were separated into break-out rooms where they could discuss each presentation and formulate a question to ask in the chat box for the presenter. This meant that the day could be kept on schedule and that the presenter was not overwhelmed with questions. This also gave participants an opportunity to connect with people and consider different perspectives when it came to the presentations themselves. For me especially, after being isolated within my own bubble of research, it was insightful to have been brought back to the surface to consider other areas of interest outside of my specialisms.

In the first group of presenters, Shweta Bisht of University of Warwick, Mariana Cordero Caballero of University of Sheffield, and Liliana Stalin of London Metropolitan University shared their research surrounding teacher feedback and teacher beliefs. It was fascinating for me to hear about different cultures and practices outside of my own, and it highlighted how little research there is in feedback practice in some countries that teach English, with Shweta citing India as an example.

In the second group, there was a focus on more novel learning strategies. There were two foci in this section. The use of technology for self-study and for use in the classroom, by Dean Webber of Oxford Brookes University and I, and translanguaging, a concept introduced by Daniel Calvert of University College London. This part of the day aligned most with my research interests, especially when Dean talked about how accessible digital platforms are when it comes to using them to learn a language. For example, Netflix and Youtube are popular among users who want to learn a language through their favourite television show. This is especially prevalent now, as the pandemic kickstarted a transition into online learning to replace formal education. Williamson, Eynon and Potter (2020, p. 107) noted that this way of teaching and learning is not necessarily new, but it does now have a renewed sense of importance in this current climate. I drew upon this in my own presentation, as although it may not be the best way to learn for every individual, digital learning is something that can often be overlooked in favour of the current curriculum and traditional teaching.

Not only was I brought back to reality in the sense of my research, but also in my privilege as someone who has English as their first language. This was highlighted by the third group of presenters: Artemis Topouzi, Helen Lyttle and Siwei Lin of University of East Anglia, University of Glasgow, and University of Nottingham respectively. What resonated with me was Helen's argument that home students have natural advantages when it comes to writing argumentative pieces in academia compared to international students. In her presentation, she explained how international students will have often only written a maximum of 500 words for their IELTS (International English Language Testing System) writing test - and the jump from that to 2,000 words or more in a typical assignment positions them at an immediate disadvantage. This prompted a deep discussion in my break-out room. I brought up how in my Welsh high school, we were taught a specific method to write argumentative sentences: make the point, back it up with evidence, and then explain. I was the only one who had that experience.

Throughout the day, it was also interesting to see the variety of ways people had managed to collect data, despite the restrictions. For example, we did not have the luxury of being able to conduct in-person interviews, do classroom observations or travel to other countries that held relevance to our research. Some took advantage of communities and organisations they were already involved in; others became even more acquainted with online platforms in order to record interviews virtually. In my case, I conducted my interviews through Skype and recorded them through the platform itself. On a positive note, I was able to connect with people all over the world, and everyone could participate from the comfort of their homes. The ability

to adapt quickly to unprecedented circumstances is a skill I can transfer to many situations in the future.

In the final section, Irvin Romero of University of Edinburgh, Jennifer Fanjin Meng of the University of Leeds and Beatrice Massa of Swansea University were reflecting on and analysing ELT and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) textbooks. When it came to these projects, Irvin's method intrigued me. He was exploring the use of ELT textbooks for visually impaired learners, and his aim was to reflect upon his experiences as a teacher in order to reassess how textbooks can be more accessible for all of his students. It was interesting to see Irvin's personal investment in the project, and how he aimed to take the issue at hand a step further, by creating a case study focused on his own teaching. This brought attention to the issues surrounding resource accessibility and applied them to a real-life situation.

In terms of accessing personal culture, Jennifer was looking at Chinese ELT textbooks, and found that the sources she examined focused on teaching Chinese culture to their students. In a study by Tajeddin and Pakzadian this year, they analysed three different ELT textbooks and there was only representation of native English-speaking culture (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020). It was fascinating to see how Jennifer's findings conflicted with the literature and goes to show how much more potential there is in this research area.

There is also potential in terms of vocabulary to analyse in textbooks. Beatrice presented her research on the use of the word "get" in EAP textbooks, which looks like a rather small, insignificant word. She pointed out that the beauty of it is that it has a whole host of meanings depending on the context. Although she had not finished her analysis, she sparked a rich discussion in the chatroom that held testament to the importance of her findings.

I (virtually) left the MA ELT Quick Fire Presentation Event feeling enriched. I met like-minded people, like my supervisor said I would. I even got to speak a little Spanish, which I had not had the opportunity to do since my BA. Writing a dissertation can become a lonely experience, as it is inevitable that the writer's heart and soul is put into work that only they can claim ownership for. However, connecting with a community in the same boat as me, especially in unprecedented circumstances, helped me understand different perspectives to common causes.

If my research has taught me anything, it is that the future of English Language Teaching is more complex than just "making everything digital", as there are still issues to discuss within pre-existing resources and strategies. Attending this event reminded me of the fact that teachers are more than the resources they use. Some of the presenters are teachers as well as researchers, and it was inspiring to see how their teaching influenced their projects. I would like to thank Tilly, Ana, and the ReSIG for granting me this opportunity as an academic who is fairly new to the world of research. I felt inspired, motivated, and energised to finish my dissertation, and to see what is in store for the future.

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## Biodata

Bronwyn Latham is an MA Language and Linguistics student at Cardiff University. She has a BA in Spanish from the University of Chester. Her research interests revolve around second language acquisition and the integration of digital learning tools in language education.

# Introduction to MA ELT Quick Fire Presentation Event brief reports and narrated slides

Following Bronwyn Latham's reflective report of the MA ELT Quick Fire Presentation Event in the previous article, this section includes the contributions of another four presenters. In keeping with the succinct and informal yet rigorous nature of the event - 5-minute PowerPoint presentations given by MA dissertation students about their research - we invited presenters to submit the slides they had prepared, accompanied by a recorded narration, and/or a brief written report to introduce their presentation. We hope that these formats will provide readers with a clear snapshot of each dissertation project, as well as a window into the event itself.

Both Dean Webber and Liu Siwei have contributed narrated slides together with brief reports on their dissertation projects, and you will find QR codes included within their reports. Scan the code using a QR reader to access the narrated PowerPoint slides that each report summarises, or simply click on the QR code image. Two further presenters have contributed through one format only: Artemis Topouzi has written a brief report of her research, and Dionisia Stella Ayu Saputri has shared her narrated slides, which you can access via the QR code in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** QR code to access Dionisia Stella Ayu Saputri's narrated PowerPoint slides  
(or click on the image)

For more information about the MA ELT Quick Fire Presentation Event, please see: [resig.weebly.com/the-ma-elt-quick-fire-presentation-event](https://resig.weebly.com/the-ma-elt-quick-fire-presentation-event)



# Self-study learning strategies: An investigation into the use of English language audio-visual media in proficient adult English language learners

Dean Webber

Oxford Brookes University

The presentation (Figure 1) that this report is supporting set out to very briefly introduce my research project (titled above), which was a summative dissertation project for my Master's degree in TESOL at Oxford Brookes University.



Figure 1. QR code to access the narrated PowerPoint slides.

The project was inspired by my observations as an English language teacher in Japan – that learners who used English language audio-visual (AV) media in their own free time tended to show better English language skills – and my own L2 learning experiences acquiring Japanese, which was mostly self-taught and was helped by my own interest in AV media such as films and computer games.

My research design was dictated by the following three research questions:

1. What strategies do proficient English language learners utilise when viewing popular English language AV media?
2. What motivational factors lead to popular English language AV media use by proficient English language learners?
3. What relationship exists (if any) between proficient English language learners' attitudes and motivations towards popular English language AV media and any strategies they utilise?

I utilised an interpretivist multiple case study approach to try and answer them, collecting qualitative data through interviews and questionnaires from a cohort of 20 non-native speakers, recruited from 13 different countries and 10 different L1 backgrounds.

My study is limited in that longitudinal data could have provided more in-depth data regarding self-study strategies. Yet on the other hand, from a real-life researcher's perspective who may well be restricted by time, money, ethical limitations and not to mention COVID-19 implications, my study hopefully represents a successful attempt at answering a scientific query in the most efficient and productive way possible, considering the general circumstances most teachers, scholars and researchers find themselves in.

I also truly do believe that the future applications and *implications* that learning through AV media offers the ELT community, and in fact the entire education community, are of incredible importance. I envisage schools and educators making far more use of AV media, developing more engaging and technologically appropriate curricula and learning platforms. My predictions – that the private sector could begin embedding learning tools directly inside platforms such as YouTube, or developing gaming software which teaches learners new skills as you play – are arguably not too far-fetched. Whatever is to come, its potential is vast and more research in this area is much needed.

In the accompanying narrated presentation, I provide an overview of my research project and present my tentative findings as they stand at the early stages of my analysis. I hope that by viewing my presentation, the readers of *ELT Research* can gain an appreciation of the necessity for further research into AV media and its application to pedagogy, as well as be inspired that despite the hurdles presented by the likes of COVID, small-scale research products can still be fruitful and productive.

# **‘Can you have your cake and eat it?’ A small-scale exploratory study of the influence of neoliberalism on managerial practices at private LTOs in China**

**Liu Siwei (Shirley)**  
University of Nottingham

This research explores the aspects of Director of Studies (DOS) and owners’ managerial practices that are influenced by neoliberalism at five private Language Teaching Organizations (LTOs) in the shadow education industry in urban China. Shadow education is the after-school private tutoring sector that is prevalent in China. It is an under-regulated industry, thus even the Chinese Ministry of Education does not have an accurate record of the number of LTOs, and it is scarcely researched compared with full-time formal education. However, the market size of this industry is as huge as 60 billion GBP a year in 2020, with close to one million LTOs competing for a piece of the cake (Deloitte, 2018). Under such circumstances, the DOS and owners as the management of an LTO are responsible for the viability of their business. It is sensible that the management go to great lengths to ensure the maximization of their profit to survive amidst the competition. Therefore, the management’s neoliberal profit orientation would somewhat influence their managerial practices. This study looks into the specific areas where managerial practices are influenced by a neoliberal stance and evaluates these practices (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. QR to access the narrated PowerPoint slides this report.**

White, Hockley, Jansen and Laughner (2008) suggest that DOS and LTO owners have different roles compared with teachers in most contexts; management generally has wider responsibilities, whereas teachers mainly focus on teaching and their own continuous development. A teacher’s time is limited, and whether to

utilize his/her time to create profit for the organization or to invest it in a teacher's personal growth is a dilemma faced by the management. The 'cake' refers to the economic benefit, which can be viewed from both short-term and long-term perspectives. Can the management have their 'cake' and at the same time eat it? The decision about whether the management should focus on imminent gains to eat their 'cake' now, or whether they should hold their appetite for the moment and enjoy the 'cake' in the future (a future which may never come if they fail to survive in the competition), is a difficult decision to make. During the interviews I conducted with the DOS and LTO owners, all the participants acknowledged the significance of teachers' Continuous Professional Development (CPD) (Mann, 2005). It seems plausible to have the cake; while in actual managerial practices, it may not be as straight-forward as it sounds.

The literature suggests there are conflicts between teachers' CPD and neoliberal tenets (Li & De Costa, 2017; Santos, 2017). My current empirical findings indicate that all these LTOs only provide rare or random in-service training to their teachers and some LTOs do not even have pre-service training for novice teachers, and such findings corroborate with the literature. On the other hand, is it wrong to eat the cake to keep the organization and its employees from starving? Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic when all LTOs in China were forced to cease offline operation from February 2020, and not all organizations had resumed their face-to-face classes even by September 2020. If an organization could not shift its operation online immediately to continue to generate revenue, considering the rent expenses and other fixed operating costs, they faced an immediate threat to their survival. It is unrealistic to evaluate the neoliberal influenced managerial practices via a merit or demerit dichotomy. Therefore, I have further elaborated on the research and my findings in the narrated PPT slides attached. How to achieve the perfect balance between being neoliberal and creating a supportive environment for teachers is a future research area worth exploration.

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# Willingness to communicate in English as an L2: Investigating Greek learners' perspectives and their teacher's strategies

Artemis Topouzi

University of East Anglia

This brief report provides an overview of my recently completed MA research, which investigated students' perceptions of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English in a private language institute in Greece, and the strategies that their teacher uses to encourage their WTC. The literature review for this study is based on research by MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Kimberly (1998) and their L2 WTC heuristic model. They argue that a learner's decision to speak or not depends on the situations they are in, is determined by the persons with whom they speak, and the speaker's state communicative self-confidence (the capacity to communicate effectively at a particular moment and the lack of anxiety, which shows a high correlation with WTC).

The teacher and the students of one specific class were invited to participate in this online qualitative study. I intentionally selected a class of 13- to 18-year-olds using "purposeful sampling" (Creswell, 2012, p. 206), since younger students would not be able to answer questions on their WTC. My familiarity with such a group and my experience so far as an English teacher in a private language institute led me to choose the participants and the place of the project. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does a group of 13- to 18-year-old Greek EFL students view their willingness to communicate (WTC) in class?
2. What strategies (if any) does the teacher use to encourage students' WTC in class?

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were conducted online due to the unprecedented situation of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide. The interviews were audio-recorded and conducted in Greek in order to avoid potential barriers.

Major themes derived from this study were that good mood and familiarity with the topic facilitated WTC, while the shift to online teaching and fear of judgment

blocked students' WTC. As for the teacher, consistent use of L2, choice of particular materials, and consistent use of error correction were the main strategies used to develop the students' WTC. For both students and teacher, the situation of the pandemic did not create opportunities for conversation in the target language. It is noteworthy that a great deal of L2 WTC research has been conducted in Canada, Japan, China, Korea, Croatia, and Turkey; however, limited information has been provided in the Greek context. A notable exception is Nikoletou (2017), who conducted a multiple case study in a private college in Greece and found that L2 WTC is a complex construct that has different aspects and that it is affected by the teacher's attitudes.

My study, through its investigation of a group of Greek EFL students' L2 WTC, offers valuable information on how their teacher can develop their WTC. It would be beneficial for teachers generally to be provided with the relevant skills for classroom development and online teaching so that they can "adjust to a post-pandemic world" (Kennedy, 2020, p. 15). The study will be helpful for teachers (including me) to develop their knowledge of the factors that affect learners' WTC in class.

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## **Review of *Mentoring Teachers to Research their Classrooms: A Practical Handbook* by Richard Smith (British Council, 2020)**

**Rhian Webb**

**British Council Sri Lanka**

This handbook is the first of its kind in that its content is directly aimed at providing practical guidance to teacher-mentors and suggests how to effectively develop oneself as a mentor to classroom-based teacher-researchers. The reader is guided through a diverse array of teacher-research mentoring considerations by a safe pair of hands; namely, by Richard Smith. Richard Smith is a well-known and experienced research practitioner, teacher-mentor, author, conference presenter and co-ordinator of teacher-research mentoring schemes spanning Latin America and South Asia. His commitment to sharing his international experiences of mentoring teachers to carry out classroom-based research is evident in this handbook; the content, the individual activities, the infographics, the graphic organisers, the QR hyperlinks to informative videos and the attractive photos all shout “I am passionate about this!” from every page. Whether you are a newcomer to mentoring teachers on their research journeys, a teacher-trainer tasked with running training and development schemes, or a teacher-researcher looking for expert guidance on conducting classroom-based research, there is something in this handbook for everyone, and it doesn’t matter where or with whom you are working – there are nuggets of advice for educators working in different contexts around the world; be it in government schools, tertiary providers or language schools.

In Part I, the author stresses the importance of reflecting on one’s own mentoring experiences by keeping a diary, talking to other mentors, keeping a log of critical moments, and exploring ways to develop collaborative teacher-mentor relationships; all of which could prove useful later down the track. The next suggestion is that the mentor considers researching his/her mentoring practices either with a co-mentor(s) or a mentee(s). Not only does this help mentors to develop from doing their own practitioner research, but also could be shared with others and make a much-needed contribution to this field where there is a lack of published reports on teacher-research mentoring practices. Then, the author gives the reader pause for thought on the topic, “what can mentors of teacher-researchers achieve?” Encouragement here is provided: from receiving some mentoring -

teacher-researchers can gain a greater sense of self-efficacy, autonomy, agency, and make better decisions when it comes to developing classroom-based research-focussed competencies and adapting their teaching and learning beliefs, perceptions, behaviours and so on, as a result of their research endeavours. The author advocates for the mentor to draw their mentee's attention to the benefits of carrying out exploratory action research and to support them throughout the process.

Part II of the handbook deals with each part of the teacher-researcher process in turn - ranging from helping teachers to select a research topic, guiding teachers to develop research questions, preparing teachers to collect data, supporting teachers to analyse and interpret data, and helping teachers to share and reflect on their research. One of the most challenging phases of mentoring a teacher through the research process is at the beginning, when the teacher is formulating a research question. Indeed, this is tricky, yet Smith offers the reader step-by-step tasks which scaffold the process for the mentor who in turn can scaffold it for the mentee. Comparisons can be drawn between the reader's answers and those offered by the author in the Answer Key section. Towards the end, the author touches on some of the potential and anticipated outcomes that teachers often gain from doing classroom research. For instance, sometimes the unintended outcome is that the teacher learns something significant from the research experience ('teacher-learning'). Sometimes, the intended outcome is that the effectiveness of the action a teacher has taken ('action research') can be evaluated by comparing the situation from a 'before and after' perspective.

There are some delightful free resources in this handbook; perhaps too many to list in this review but be sure not to miss the QR codes taking the reader to recently designed videos where mentors talk about various aspects of mentoring and share their invaluable experiences with us. And for those who are particularly interested in finding out more about how to disseminate your own mentoring experiences and reflections to other educators, check out the Further Resources section, as it is packed to the rafters with a variety of multimedia resources which never fail to impress.

#### Biodata



Rhian Webb (British Council, Sri Lanka) has been working in TEFL since 1997. Over the years, she has worked in several countries including Australia, China, North Cyprus and Sri Lanka. She is an enthusiastic EFL teacher and teacher trainer and enjoys doing Exploratory Practice classroom-based research. She also enjoys working in the educational fields of fostering learners' democratic competencies and contributing to peace education projects and festivals.



## IATEFL ReSIG PCE:

### The role of Research in English Language Teaching and Teacher Education

Friday 18 June 2021, 10.00-17.00

Crowne Plaza Harrogate, King's Road, Harrogate, HG1 1XX

This year's IATEFL PCE connects researchers, language teachers and teacher educators who are interested in the integration of research in English language teaching and teacher education.

The PCE has been divided into two strands: (1) Research in English language teaching, and (2) Research in teacher education. In both strands, we will pose critical questions and attempt to answer them in a collective manner. Research in English language teaching will explore what and how to do research in language teaching, who should do research in language teaching, why research language teaching, and when, where and how often to do research in language teaching. Similarly, research in teacher education will examine the role of research at a BA, MA and PhD level, within teacher education programmes, and in continuous teacher education and development.

Through the day, we will have stimulating discussions and we will get to know different research projects in ELT and in teacher education through poster presentations, followed by group reflections.

We expect the PCE to be a dialogical and reflective instance where all delegates can openly discuss the relevance and role of research in their contexts, learn about research initiatives in diverse contexts worldwide, and develop networking opportunities.

#### Morning, 18 June

10.00-10.15	Welcome and opening of day
10.15-10.45	Small group discussions: Critical questions: Research in English language teaching (led by Graham Hall)
10.45-12.00	Coffee and poster presentations <b>Susanna Schwab</b> , Bern University of Teacher Education: Teachers' use of a textbook for English at primary school <b>Asli Lidice Gokturk Saglam</b> , Ozyegin University: What can research offer for better teaching and assessment: exploring student perceptions of source-based writing <b>Natalie A Donohue</b> , University of Leeds: Key considerations in conducting an online, longitudinal qualitative research project with novice EFL teachers <b>Loreto Aliaga Salas</b> , University of Leeds: Creating quiet reflective spaces: Language teacher research as professional development

	<p><b>Oriana Oñate</b>, Universidad de La Frontera: Research within English teacher education programmes in non-speaking English contexts</p> <p><b>Paula Rebolledo</b>, RICELT: The champion teachers programme: What do teachers research?</p> <p><b>Ravinarayan Chakrakodi</b>, Regional Institute of English South India: Exploratory research and its classroom impact</p> <p><b>Seden Eraldemir Tuyan</b>, Çağ University: ‘Classroom-based Research’ and transformative learning experiences of EFL teachers’ for professional development</p>
12:00-12:15	Reflections by ReSIG (Ana Inés Salvi, Celia Antoniou, Marisol Guzmán)
12:15-13:15	Lunch Break

### Afternoon, 18 June

13.15-13.45	Small group discussion: Critical questions on Research in teacher education (led by Darío Luis Banegas)
13.45-15.00	<p>Coffee and Poster presentations</p> <p><b>Marisol Guzman Cova</b>, University of Southampton: Teacher autonomy: a comparative study of Turkish and Mexican case studies</p> <p><b>Eric Enongene Ekembe</b>, ENS Yaounde/CAMELTA: Developing agency in professional development and practitioner research in low-resourced contexts: The CAMELTA research group experience</p> <p><b>Rhian Webb</b>, The British Council: The nuances of exploratory practice research in teacher training</p> <p><b>Nahla Nassar</b>, Lancaster University: The development of Pre-Service English teachers’ TPACK through a course based on TPACK</p> <p><b>Pelin Derinalp</b>, University of York: The power of “why?”: On the journey of being a reflective practitioner</p> <p><b>Isora Justina Enriquez O’Farrill</b>, University of Pedagogical Sciences: Developing research skills in the Cuban language teacher education programme</p> <p><b>Maha Hassan</b>, Teaching ESL Hub: Leading the way to becoming a teacher-researcher</p>
15.00-15.15	Reflections by ReSIG (Emily Edwards, Loreto Aliaga, Ernesto Vargas Gil)
15.15-16.45	<p>Group reflection and Discussing critical questions (moderated by Graham Hall and Dario Banegas).</p> <p>Delegates to reflect in groups and share those reflections (gains, questions or comments).</p>
16.45-17.00	Evaluation and winding up of the day

For more information on the schedule of the event, please visit the IATEFL website at [iatefl.org/conference/role-research-english-language-teaching-and-teacher-education](http://iatefl.org/conference/role-research-english-language-teaching-and-teacher-education).



## **54th International Conference & Exhibition**

19<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021



### **IATEFL ReSIG Pre-conference Event**

'The role of Research in English Language Teaching  
and Teacher Education'

**Friday 18 June 2021, 10.00-17.00**

What and how to do research in language teaching?

Who should do research in language teaching?

Why research language teaching?

When, where, how often to do research in language teaching?

**More information at [bit.ly/3pauNdN](https://bit.ly/3pauNdN)**