

ELT Research in Action

Jessica Mackay
Marilisa Birello
Daniel Xerri

Preface by
Graham Hall

Bringing
together
two communities
of practice



IATEFL Research SIG

Re



Proceedings
of the second
ELTRIA Conference

Barcelona 26 - 27 April 2019

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Preface

Graham Hall

Where do our ideas about language teaching and learning come from? And how does our knowledge develop, both as individuals working within the field and as a professional community as a whole? Clearly, there is no single answer to these questions; all of us working in English language teaching – as teachers, researchers and teacher-researchers, as well as materials writers, managers and so forth – develop our understandings of what make teaching and learning more effective from a variety of sources, including our own learning experiences, our experience as teachers, conversations with colleagues, teacher training, development and education courses, workshops and texts, and, of course, research.

Yet the role of research in ELT is widely contested. Some argue that research is irrelevant to and inaccessible for teachers, and values ‘scientific’ knowledge over local and context-based understandings of language teaching and learning. In contrast, others are concerned that a wholesale rejection of research will leave us going round in circles, relying on unproven or undemonstrated intuitions which block change and development, both as individuals and within the English language teaching profession more generally. While there is some truth in both these perspectives, perhaps a way to reconcile these viewpoints is to clarify what we mean by ‘research’, which is, at its most fundamental level, any systematic activity which tries to answer or shed light on a particular question or phenomena. Thus although the perspectives, approaches and methodologies, and even language used by researchers and teachers can differ wildly, anyone engaged in systematically exploring a question, problem or issue about teaching and learning, whether in their own classroom or at a more abstract or theoretical level, is engaging in some form of research.

Of course, I can't claim this as a new or original insight, particularly to readers of this volume! But it is worth restating, as it helps counter the notion that there is an unbridgeable divide or 'gap' between research and practice. Teachers constantly encounter and reflect upon new ideas, ideas which have been at some point researched (according to our broad definition), and many teachers themselves engage in forms of research. Meanwhile, many researchers are themselves teachers, and seek to think through the practical implications of their investigations for classroom life. Thus, what is perhaps lacking at times in ELT are not so much links between research and practice at a conceptual level – as I have suggested, research and teaching are deeply entwined – but rather, the practical places and spaces in which the relationship between research and practice, and between researchers and practitioners (including, of course teacher-researchers), can be explored and developed through fruitful dialogue and exchange. The ELT Research In Action (ELTRIA) Conferences provide such a space.

Having been fortunate enough to attend and learn a great deal at the first ELTRIA Conference in 2017, I was very disappointed when I discovered that other commitments in my diary would cause me to miss the 2019 event and all I would have discovered there. However, although there is perhaps never quite a substitute for the face-to-face exchanges and insights conferences can offer, these proceedings recreate and take forward the conference discussions around a range of key themes concerning ELT research and practice for both attendees and non-attendees alike. The volume both prompts us, as readers, to think more deeply about the relationship between research and practice (or should that be practice and research?), and also gives us a sense of a range of hot topics in our field.

In our busy daily working lives, it is often difficult to 'take time out' in order to think about why we do what we do, where our ideas about teaching and learning come from, and how we might develop our knowledge and expertise beyond what we already know and do. Additionally, it is difficult to keep abreast of the many alternative practices, possibilities and insights that colleagues working elsewhere in the field – as teachers, researchers, teacher-researchers, and researcher-teachers – find useful and effective in support of language teaching and learning. The ELTRIA Conferences provide time, physical and mental space, and a fantastic focus for doing just this. And these proceedings take us back to the 2019 event, inspiring us to think about and navigate the relationship between research and practice for ourselves as we develop both individually and as a professional community.

Acknowledgements

This publication would not have been possible without the collaboration, support and guidance of the LATEFL Research SIG. The SIG coordinators and committee have been closely involved since the first edition of the conference and the publication in 2017. Sarah Mercer, Daniel Xerri and Deborah Bullock encouraged the launch of the project and Daniel has been closely involved as editor and plenary speaker at last year's conference. The outgoing ReSIG Joint Coordinators, Ana Inés Salvi and Kenan Dikilitaş have continued this tradition of encouragement and invaluable advice, for which we are truly grateful. Thanks also to Matthew Ager for his patience, professionalism and expertise in the design and format of this book.

As ELTRIA conference organisers, Jessica and Marilisa would like to express their gratitude to colleagues at the Escola d'Idiomes Moderns (School of Modern Languages) at the University of Barcelona. These include the coordination, and administration team: Berta Barreda, Ciarán Canning, Elisabet Comelles, Jon Gregg, Mireia Ledesma, Raúl Mera, Xavier Navarro, and Adriana Peña and the organising committee and volunteers who contributed so much to the success of the event: Jovanka Babic, Dr Phil Banks, Judith Dunan, Matt Evans, Judith Dunan, Sean Hurson, Sean Hutchman, Dawn McRobbie, Brendan Sheridan and Miguel Vega.

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Jessica Mackay, Marilisa Birello and Daniel Xerri

Notes on contributors

Yasmine ABDELHAMID ATWA
Freelance EFL teacher, EGYPT
yasmine.abdelhamid@gmail.com



Yasmine Atwa has been an English teacher for more than 15 years. She has a BA in English Pedagogy and an Applied Linguistics Diploma. Her research interests include learner autonomy, SLA, formative assessment, learning technologies, and cognitive processes that aid learning and language acquisition. She has presented at many international conferences as well as in IATEFL webinars.

Maria ANDRIA
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, GREECE
maria.andria25@gmail.com



Dr. Maria Andria is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, in the Department of Linguistics. She holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition from the University of Barcelona. She has previously served as a lecturer and postdoctoral

researcher at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Department of Language and Literature Education, and Social Science Education) and at the University of Barcelona (Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and of English Studies).

Marilisa BIRELLO
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, SPAIN
marilisa.birello@uab.cat



Marilisa Birello is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education Sciences at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She has co-authored two series of coursebooks for learners of Italian.

David BLOCK
ICREA & Universitat de Pompeu Fabra, SPAIN
davidmartin.block@upf.edu



Professor David Block is ICREA Research Professor in Sociolinguistics in the Departament d'Humanitats at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and a member of the Grup de Recerca en Espais Interculturals, Llengües i Identitats (GREILI). He is also Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences (UK), Visiting Professor at University College London, Institute of Education, as well as the editor of the Routledge

book series Political Economy and Applied Linguistics.

Melanie BRENNAN

Cooperativa de Serveis Lingüístics de Barcelona, SPAIN

melanie.anne.brennan@gmail.com



Melanie is an English language teacher from Melbourne, Australia, specialised in Applied Linguistics and adult learning. She has taught in a variety of contexts in her hometown, Melbourne, and abroad in Poland, Argentina, China, and now, Spain. Her interests include new methodologies and approaches. She currently teaches Business English classes in-company in Barcelona.

Chiara BRUZZANO

School of Education, University of Leeds, UK

edcb@leeds.ac.uk



Chiara Bruzzano is a PhD researcher in Language Education, teaching assistant and MA Tutor at the University of Leeds. She also teaches ESOL and writes teacher training materials. She has taught in the UK, Italy and Spain. Her main research interests are listening pedagogy, teacher cognition, ESOL and migration.

Rachel CONNABEER

Hilderstone College, Kent, UK

rachelc@hilderstone.ac.uk



After almost 20 years teaching at university and in-company in both Germany and Italy, Rachel Connabeer returned to work in the UK at Hilderstone College, Kent. She continues to teach business English, English for Academic Purposes and Creative Teaching. Her main interests are academic writing and creative teaching. She has an MA in TESOL from Canterbury Christ Church University and is currently the Deputy Director of Studies at Hilderstone College.

Gökçe ERKAN

Middle East Technical University, Ankara, TURKEY

vgokce@metu.edu.tr



Gökçe Erkan graduated from the Department of Foreign Language Education at the Middle East Technical University (METU) and completed her MA and PhD degrees in ELT in the same university. She is currently working in METU in the Department of Modern Languages. Her academic interests include testing, measurement and evaluation and teacher training.

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Tom FLAHERTY

**Cooperativa de Serveis Lingüístics de
Barcelona, SPAIN**
York Associates, UK
tgflaherty@me.com



Tom Flaherty is a Trainer, Materials Developer and PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics, as well as a Training Consultant at York Associates, UK.

Maria GONZALEZ-DAVIES

**FPCEE_University Ramon Llull,
Barcelona, SPAIN**
mariagd@blanquerna.url.edu



Maria González-Davies is an Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Education at the University Ramon Llull (Barcelona, Spain). She was the co-director of the English Department of the School of Modern Languages of the University of Barcelona and head of the Translation Department at the University of Vic (Spain). Her most recent publication is *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Education* (co-editor: Dr. Sara Laviosa, U. Bari, Italy).

Graham HALL

Northumbria University, UK
g.hall@northumbria.ac.uk

Graham Hall is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics/TESOL at Northumbria University, UK. His book,



Exploring English Language Teaching: Language in Action (Routledge, 2nd edition, 2017), won the British Association of Applied Linguistics Book Prize 2012, and he edited *The Routledge Handbook of ELT* (2016). He was the editor of *ELT Journal* between 2013 and 2017.

Jessica MACKAY

**Escola d'Idiomes Moderns, Universitat
de Barcelona, SPAIN**
jmackay@ub.edu



Jessica Mackay, Dip TEFLA, MA and PhD in Applied Linguistics, University of Barcelona. She is an EFL teacher and head of teacher training and development at the UB's Escola d'Idiomes Moderns (School of Modern Languages).

Encarnación PÉREZ PULIDO
Universidad de Extremadura, SPAIN
encarnaperez@unex.es



Encarna graduated in English Philology from the University of Extremadura. She is currently a freelance teacher and teacher trainer, and an instructor of English Language and Literature at the University of Extremadura. She has

more than 20 years' of experience teaching English as a second language in various institutions.

Elsa TRAGANT

Universitat de Barcelona, SPAIN

tragant@ub.edu



Elsa Tragant is a senior lecturer in Applied Linguistics at the University of Barcelona. She lectures on English language teaching at undergraduate level and on research methods in SLA at MA level. She is interested in the topics of classroom research, motivation, reading while listening and intensive exposure 'at home' and abroad. She is a member of the GRAL research group.

Evangelia VASSILAKOU

Hellenic American University [alumnus], GREECE

evangelia.vassilakou@gmail.com



Evangelia Vassilakou has a BA in Philosophy from Deree College, and an MA in Applied Linguistics from the Hellenic American University with distinction. She is an experienced EAP /ESP and EFL instructor. She has presented in numerous conferences in Greece and abroad and authored various articles for the academic field.

James VENNER

Cooperativa de Serveis Lingüístics de Barcelona, SPAIN

james.w.venner@gmail.com

x



James is a full-time teacher of English for Academic Purposes at ESADE Business School and secretary of SLB, a Barcelona-based language services co-operative. He is particularly interested in task-based approaches to language teaching, educational technology and pronunciation training, along with broader issues related to the ELT industry.

Jodi WAINWRIGHT

The Open University, UK

jodi.wainwright@hotmail.co.uk



Jodi Wainwright (CELTA, MEd Applied Linguistics) is an EdD research student with the Open University. She is carrying out her research and teaching General English in central France. She is interested in the use of technologies in blended learning environments, particularly with older adults.

Tom WOGAN

**EIM, Universitat de Barcelona, SPAIN
Cambridge Assessment English, UK**

Wogan.T@cambridgeenglish.org



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Tom Wogan has been an EFL teacher in Spain since 1993. He teaches at the School of Modern Languages (EIM) at the University of Barcelona, specialising in exam preparation courses and is a Business Development Support Manager for Cambridge Assessment English.

Daniel XERRI

University of Malta, MALTA

daniel.xerri@um.edu.mt



Daniel Xerri is a Lecturer in TESOL at the University of Malta. He is the author of many publications on different areas of education and TESOL. His most recent co-edited book is *English for 21st Century Skills* (with Sophia Mavridi, 2020, Express Publishing). www.danielxerri.com

Introduction

The state of the art and the state of affairs

Jessica Mackay

As a result of the interest in and enthusiasm for the first ELT Research in Action (ELTRIA) conference in 2017, we were sure that we had identified a key area of interest in the field of ELT. The success of the subsequent publication confirmed that impression, and we were delighted to build on this energy and success in the second edition (University of Barcelona, April 26–27, 2019).

The ethos of ELTRIA is to share common experiences, interests and goals in our field. The range of topics covered in this publication are very different from those found in the 2018 edition, yet there is still something for everyone. As one review of the first edition points out, ‘the variety will appeal to both teachers and researchers, and there are sure to be a number that will speak to you’ (Reed, 2019). The publication is designed as a collection to dip into, rather than read from cover to cover. To help in that selection, this introduction aims to give the reader a brief overview of the chapters. We are sure you will find many topics that you identify with, which align with your interests, or simply pique your curiosity.

Bringing together two communities of practice

Once again, the subtitle chosen for this edition of the ELTRIA conference reflects one of the main inspirations behind ELTRIA. All three of the editors of this publication have experience both as language teachers and as researchers and, as a result, we are aware that the commonly perceived ‘research-practice divide’ is an unnecessary and occasionally arbitrary division, setting up unhelpful barriers to mutual progress. Daniel’s previously published work (Xerri & Pioquinto, 2018) and many conference presentations (including his ELTRIA 2019 plenary) support teachers in their initial experiences of teacher research. Marilisa and Jessica have set up collaborative research projects, which open up classroom doors and bring researchers and teachers into contact to investigate key issues of interest to practitioners. The

aim was, and is, to encourage research projects by teachers, with teachers and for teachers, and ideally, a combination of all three.

One of the original aims behind the first ELTRIA conference was to ‘bridge the gap’ between teachers and researchers and demystify the world of research. Teachers all too often feel excluded by academic discourse and fail to find the relevance for their everyday practice (Borg, 2009). We were delighted to find that we were not alone, and many members of our wider community shared a common goal: to identify, analyse and improve working practice and learner outcomes. New initiatives have continued to promote a spirit of mutually beneficial collaboration since 2017 (Mackay, Birello & Xerri, 2018). An important recent addition is OASIS (Open Accessible Summaries in Language Studies), which provides user-friendly overviews of research papers, often inaccessible behind paywalls. A major contributor to this ever-increasing movement is the IATEFL Research SIG (ReSIG), whose mission – ‘[to bring] together teachers, teacher-researchers, teacher educators and researchers from around the world’ –provides a unique forum for discussion. As an example, ReSIG’s latest publication focuses on the ‘transformative power of teachers engaging with and in research to develop professionally’ (Aliaga & Oncevska, 2020, p. 8).

Organisation of the book

While the topics covered in this edition of the ELTRIA publication seem, at first glance, to be very different from the first ELTRIA publication (2018), there are common themes which emerge. Conference presentations may choose to describe theories which are relevant to practice. These descriptive essays have been grouped into the section named ‘Research meets practice’; they aim to provide food for thought about possible applications and implications in class. Other presenters use research methods to gain insight into what teachers actually do or think, which we have labelled ‘Practice meets research’, as these contributions have a more exploratory aim. Some chapters eluded categorisation, as they contained elements of both, and could easily slot into either section. In these cases, a decision was made largely based on the balance between theory and research that the author had chosen to adopt.

The final section, ‘Key issues in ELT’, includes research projects which could easily reflect the discussions that we, as language teachers, may have in our staffrooms on a daily basis. These are explorations of our everyday concerns, often reflecting decisions made by others, but which have direct implications for our working lives.

Research meets practice

The first section focuses on theories which are relevant to teaching practice. It is introduced by a chapter by Maria Gonzalez-Davies, whose summary of her inspiring and thought-provoking plenary reflects current interest in the ‘multilingual turn’ (May, 2019) in language classrooms. In chapter 2, Gökçe Erkan, looks at another ‘hot’ topic: teacher empowerment, itself the subject of a plenary at the 2019 IATEFL conference (Rebolledo, 2019). In the last contribution in this section: chapter 3, Tom Wogan provides an overview of Attribution Theory and how it might be relevant to our practice.

Practice meets research

This section opens with chapter 4, in which renowned academic, Prof. David Block, examines the potential tensions within the role of teachers delivering their subjects in EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) contexts. The next two chapters, by Rachel Connabeer (5) and Evangelia Vassilakou (6), introduce novel ways of improving learners’ writing, through a content-based feedback system and web-based statistical tools respectively. Moving on to chapter 7, we look at an age group which is steadily gaining prominence in EFL classrooms. Sophie Wainwright’s study looks at the reactions and relationships formed online by a group of senior learners in an adult education programme in France.

The following chapter (8), by Maria Andria, continues a tradition established in the first edition of ELTRIA in 2017. The inclusion of studies conducted with languages other than English reveals how much language teachers have in common and serves to reinforce a sense of community, which goes beyond language or national barriers. In this case, Maria describes the perceptions of teachers and student-teachers of Greek as a FL, and teachers of any language will identify with many of the issues raised. Chapter 9 also deals with the theme of teacher perceptions. In this case, Chiara Bruzzano looks specifically at how teachers deal with the skill of listening in EFL classes.

The final two chapters in this section both analyse the integration of technology into everyday classroom practice. In chapter 10, Yasmine Abdelhamid looks at applications for Augmented Reality within teaching, learning and assessment. In the final chapter, Elsa Tragant and Jessica Mackay describe an intervention study aimed at using WhatsApp to increase EFL learners’ out-of-class Target Language exposure.

Key issues in ELT

In this concluding section, we have grouped issues of ongoing discussion and debate in our field. In chapter 12, Melanie Brennan and James Venner report on a survey on working conditions and pay in ELT. While the study in this case is limited to the area of Barcelona, Spain, the concerns they highlight will

certainly resonate with many teachers around the globe. In chapter 13, Encarnación Pérez Pulido discusses the use of learners' own language in FL classrooms, still much debated in spite of increasing evidence of the potential benefits. Last but most definitely not least, in chapter 14, Tom Flaherty gives us his insights into a discussion that shows little sign of abating on teachers' discussion groups and social media: the use (and abuse) of course books, in particular through the lens of grammar instruction.

Conclusion

As I finish working on this introduction, the world is in the grip of an unprecedented crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused dramatic changes in the way we live our lives, including the working practices of those of us involved in ELT in all its shapes and forms. Once again, I am amazed at the resilience, resourcefulness and generosity of our community, who have come together to offer mutual support and share resources. I hope that this collection can make a small contribution to this spirit of collaboration. We may be physically and socially distanced, but as a community, we have never been more connected.

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Research meets practice: The relevance of theory to teaching practice



Section 1

Translation as a natural practice in the Integrated Plurilingual Approach to Language Learning

Maria González-Davies

Plurilingual and intercultural competence defines the ability to connect the languages and cultures we know, including those with which we may be only briefly in contact. Until recently, language teachers were told that these languages and cultures were stored in separate compartments in the brain. This contradicts recent research and observation of everyday practices, where we clearly connect our linguistic repertoire to overcome linguistic and cultural challenges.

Translation, like code-switching or use of known languages, has not been generally accepted in language learning contexts, mainly since the advent of the Communicative Approach. Since the 80s, this outlook has been revised. Doubts and questions regarding one-language-only immersion programmes have risen both in research and in classroom practices: Can our linguistic and cultural repertoires be used to improve our cognitive and socio-affective skills as well as our know-how regarding language learning?

Imagine you are observing a class where the teacher focuses most of the time on the target language to be acquired, and also uses many of the languages her students speak in one way or another, for instance, to compare vocabulary, intonation patterns, or cultural references. How would you react?

Macaro (2001) has studied the use of the L1 by pre-service language teachers. He presents three categories which we have adapted to translation for our research:

- *Virtual*: translation should be totally excluded from the additional language (AL) classroom.

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- *Maximal*: there is no value in the use of translation, but it is unavoidable.
- *Optimal*: there may be pedagogical value in using translation and this should be explored.

We have adopted the Optimal Position for several reasons as to why translation, as well as other natural plurilingual practices, can be embedded in an Integrated Plurilingual Approach (IPA) to language learning in an informed way (González-Davies, 2018, 2020). Our triggering question is: if we use all the languages we know outside the classroom, why not make use of this potential to advance learning inside the classroom?

In this sense, we believe that language development depends on teaching and learning language as *use*, and that learners are language *users*. An example: imagine that you are walking down a street in Denmark on a Sunday morning. You do not speak Danish. You see a clothes shop that you like and decide to look at the opening times. This is what you see:

°ABNINGSTIDER:
Mandag-Fredag: 11-17.30
Lørdag: 10-15
Søndag: lukket

Will you bother to buy anything? Why (not)? What helped you understand the text? Here, probably without realizing it, you adopted the role of a *language researcher* because you activated certain strategies which belong to your plurilingual competence. This competence is described in the CEFR (2001, p. 4) and again in by the *Companion Volume* to the CEFR as follows: “languages and cultures are not kept in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather build up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experiences of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact” (2018, p. 157).

Moreover, recent findings in neuroscience tell us how synaptic changes do not occur in one place, but rather throughout all the connecting neurons in the brain circuit. This applies to linguistic brain circuits, too, of course. Connections are innate.

Further, Cook (2016, p.2) contributed his multi-competence perspective, which he defined as ‘the knowledge of two or more languages in the same mind and community’. The characteristics of the multi-competent mind include the following, amongst others:

- a. Expanded cognitive capacity that goes beyond the linguistic sphere to encompass and connect other aspects of learning.

- b. Efficient use of lower and higher order thinking skills, i.e. remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating (Bloom, 1956, revised in Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), and control of language resources.

At the core of this outlook lies Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis, published as far back as 1984. This hypothesis brought about a sea change in that it pointed out that some underlying features are common across languages (for example, there may be similarities between phonetics, text genres, etc.) so that, in AL learning, transfer occurs between languages because learners rely on their previous knowledge when trying to access meaning in the new language.

However, despite the rationale behind an informed use of language connections that may help us develop our plurilingual competence, what usually happens still in many classrooms is that students' linguistic repertoires are not treated as an interconnected entity but are kept separate, thus subscribing to a somewhat puzzling practice where students who, in many cases, are already bi- or pluri-lingual are taught through monolingual instruction to become bi- or pluri-lingual!

What can we practise through translation and other natural plurilingual practices? Research based on observation of good practices has led us to the conclusion that, far from the average opinion that accessing them is only useful for snap problem-solving or individual work on reading and writing, natural plurilingual practices improve other aspects efficiently:

1. To relate vocabulary and grammar between different languages.
2. To practise 4 skills: listening, writing, reading and speaking.
3. To notice and discuss similarities and differences between different languages and cultural references.
4. To develop communication and translation techniques to favour an efficient transference of meaning.
5. To develop mental agility and flexibility when dealing with real life plurilingual communicative situations.
6. To acknowledge and connect different languages and cultures in the classroom, thus respecting identities.

How can this be done? The above implies that specific pedagogical scaffolding is needed to bridge languages in an effective way. Our pedagogical framework draws from collaborative and context-based teaching and learning practices. We integrate translation and plurilingual activities in didactic sequences, that is, chains of topic-based activities that lead to a visible product. Two syllabus models have emerged from our research:

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1. *Integrated IPA tasks*: plurilingual tasks are integrated consistently next to the monolingual tasks used to work on a given topic, or
2. *Parallel IPA projects*: a parallel plurilingual project related to the working topic is implemented.

In short, research and observation of best practices are now confirming that translation and other natural plurilingual practices occupy a rightful place in language learning and, from a wider perspective, in learning in general since the benefits are not restricted to cognition, but also to identity and social issues.

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Improvement through empowerment

Gökçe Erkan

Introduction

Educational institutions are always looking for ways of renewing their teaching practices, supporting their teachers for professional development and ultimately aiming at providing better teaching for their students. Ways of achieving this aim which have proven to be beneficial include training sessions given by experts in their fields, providing instructors with opportunities for attending seminars, conferences on various topics of interest, or holding in-house workshops for idea sharing.

The current study examines a new form of professional improvement, designed for teachers by teachers who have experienced a specific challenge in their teaching and have experimented with different ways of dealing with it. What makes this study different from others is the approach it adopts. The aim is to share experiences, give advice by providing suggestions and, in this way, empower teachers to deal with similar kinds of problems they may face in the future. Rather than “training”, this activity is closer to “mentoring” as the mentor acts as “the more experienced other” and shares knowledge with less experienced colleagues. This process is first applied for the core team in the institution, then this core team shares their learning with the other instructors in the school so all the instructors in the institution develop knowledge and strategies about how to deal with the issue.

Purpose of the study

The current study presents an account of the methodological lessons and emerging findings of a collaborative action research project that started in May 2018. The issue or ‘puzzle’ dealt with in this case was the development of an appropriate writing rating scale for the assessment of essays at university level.

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A cyclical process of action, reflection and refined action was adopted. In this bottom-up approach, team members as a whole agree on the course of action and participate in every step of the process.

Method

Participants

The project team consisted of 22 members (instructors and administrators) from five state universities in Turkey. As a ‘mixed educator team’, as defined by Schmuck (2006), the group agreed to cooperate for the rest of the academic year to develop an essay rating scale that would meet local needs. The group adopted a ‘collaborative perspective’ on action research, which encourages teachers to share common problems and work cooperatively as a research community, as suggested by Burns (1999).

Process

In the first step, instructors from two universities analyzed each other’s scales. As the host university had an effective rubric that worked, it was decided to develop an essay writing scale collaboratively. It was believed that developing a rating scale in house with teacher involvement increases both validity and investment by those using the scale (Plakans, 2013). In the following meetings, the group worked on defining “the writing construct” (using CEFR descriptors), student samples, and produced the preliminary scale. The scale was piloted in the summer school. After the piloting process, the rubric was revised and was ready for use. At the beginning of the term, the instructors in the core team held sessions for the all instructors in their universities to share the whole process and make them aware of how the rubric had evolved.

Data Collection

To get feedback on the whole process and to improve practice, a small-scale study was conducted with the instructors who attended the sessions. For this purpose, qualitative data collection tools, namely an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, were used to collect data.

The open-ended questionnaire consisted of seven questions and was filled in by all the participants of the study (N=22). The questions in the questionnaire were as follows:

1. How valuable was the overall session?
2. What did you like most about the session?
3. What aspect(s) of the session is/are applicable to your own context?
4. How much new information did you receive in the session?

5. How engaging was the overall session?
6. What aspect(s) could be improved or reconsidered in the session?
7. Other comments

Participants' responses were analysed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) technique of clustering data. The following themes emerged:

- Beneficial (96%)
- Great chance/opportunity (86.7%)
- Very informative (88.3%)
- To be continued (73.4%)

Only eight instructors in the study were interviewed due to interviewees' time constraints. The interviews followed up on the questions in the questionnaire to gain further insight into the whole process and learn more about teachers' opinions of the experience. The questions were as follow:

1. How do you think you can use the things you learned in the sessions in your own context?
2. How did you feel at the beginning of the session?
3. Did your feelings change at the end of the session? If yes, how?

All the interviewees embraced the idea of collective experience and teacher collaboration. They felt a shared sense of purpose and were happy to disseminate their knowledge and experience with others later. As Johnson (2003) mentions, they had a joint responsibility for the outcomes and in the end, felt appreciated as they had a role in the decision-making process. The participants also mentioned liking the idea of "mentor" rather than "trainer" as they felt less threatened this way. Instead of an expert telling them what to do, they liked being guided by somebody who had faced similar challenges in their own institutions. This gave them the feeling of not being alone in the field. In summary, they asked to continue with the practice of mentor-coaching in other similar projects.

Results

The teachers highlighted the discovery that learning involves creating and sharing knowledge by doing things together with others. In this study, people were working together as partners on the same task with different roles. The experienced teacher acted as the mentor helping others to think things through. The aim of the mentor was not to "rescue" or "fix things". It was a joint search for the solution. It was the institution itself that did the thinking. The mentor-coach just helped and encouraged the process and offered

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practical solutions. In the end, the mentor was able to generate change. The whole process achieved its aim as the instructors learned to do things without the mentor-coach, which led to autonomy.

Discussion

Each institution is unique, which means there cannot be a “one size fits all” mentality. Institutions should try to identify their unique approach by considering “how to take action and what action to take”. By adopting the mentor-coaching approach, an institution may learn about how those in other institutions with similar kinds of challenges go about dealing with them. The key here, however, is to provide support that can help to unlock the potential in the instructors for capacity building, which would lead to empowerment to deal with similar kinds of problems in the future. Therefore, it can be said that instructors involved in this kind of sharing session go through a powerful, enlightening, rewarding experience. This is a method rich in potential as learning how to deal with one problem equips instructors to deal with other problems. In the case of the development of writing rubrics in this study, the next step would be developing rubrics for speaking tasks. The same approach would be used to elaborate effective criteria to assess another very subjective skill.

Implications

The most important implication of this study is that teachers value collaboration. They enjoy working things out collectively. As Richardson (2010) puts it, solidarity is at the core of collective power. Therefore, institutions should give importance to this idea of mentor-coaching and search for opportunities for collaborative work. Each institution will have their strengths and weaknesses. Sharing experiences in their fields of strength can facilitate the development of a community of solidarity.

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Weiner's attribution theory of motivation and ELT

Tom Wogan

The background

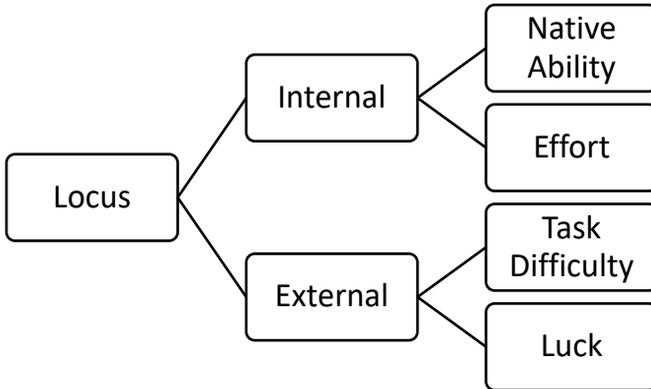
What does it mean to succeed in something? What does it mean to fail? What is necessary for success and, by its absence, failure? These are the questions that Attribution Theory seeks to answer. But, what is it?

In social psychology, attribution is the process of inferring the causes of events or types of behaviour. To put it more simply, to what do we attribute our success or failure? In real life, attribution is something we do every day. Like most psychological processes, we are generally unaware we are doing it. We just say: 'I didn't do well in that test, because it was too difficult.' Or, we might say of someone else's success: 'They always do well because they have a talent.' Attribution Theory tries to map out the factors that intervene in our inferences.

The theory

The founding father of Attribution Theory was Fritz Heider (1896–1988). He observed that whether we succeed or fail was irrelevant; what mattered was how we perceived our success or failure. Our perceptions are based on four factors that are necessary conditions for success and failure. According to Frieze (1976) the four factors are native ability, effort, task difficulty and luck. Of these, native ability and effort are generally considered the most dominant. However, the question still remains as to how these factors combine to influence our perceptions. What is required is a theoretical framework to explain their possible distribution. This is what Bernard Weiner (1979; 1980) tried to do. His solution was to locate these factors on three continuums of causality: locus, stability and controllability.

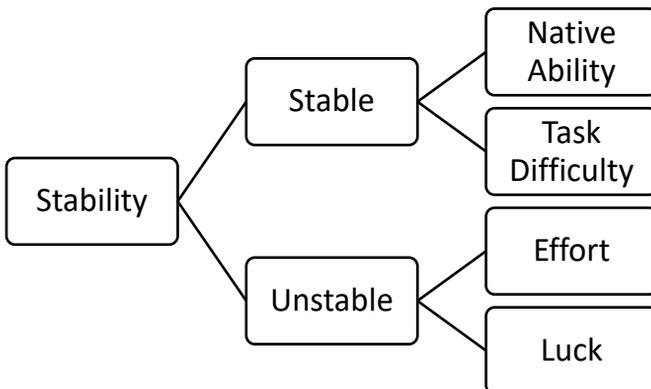
Locus



By 'locus' Weiner means where the cause is found, its origin. This locus can be 'internal' (me) or 'external' (not me). According to this distinction the factors found internally are native ability and effort, and those that are external are task difficulty and luck.

If we attribute success internally, we are in control. If I take a test and get a good mark, I can say that it is down to my own ability and the hard work I put in revising for it. This attribution feeds my self-esteem: my success is down to me. It also creates a simple conditional that can be used to account for success, namely: if I am proactive in my learning (e.g., take notes and copy them up, engage with the target language outside of class, etc.), then my success will be repeated.

Stability

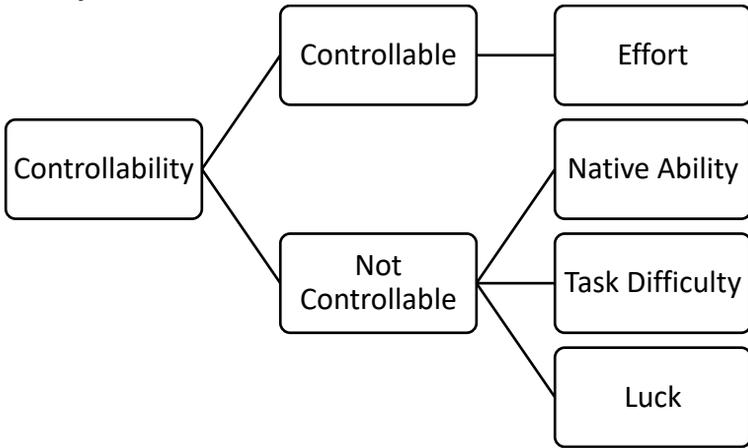


By 'stability' Weiner means whether the success or failure is replicable. If our expectations are stable, then we do not expect them to change in the future and so, by extension, we expend little effort in trying to improve. It is generally

SECTION 1: RESEARCH MEETS PRACTICE

accepted that we cannot change our native abilities and that they generally remain the same.

Controllability



Finally, the third aspect, controllability, is related to an individual’s sense of control. As we can see in the diagram the only causal attribute that we have complete control over is effort. We cannot exercise control over ability, task difficulty or luck. This means we make an effort if we think it directly affects the outcome.

Attribution theory and ELT

How can Attribution Theory help us as teachers? Where does it fit into ELT? I believe there are three areas where it plays a role. These are learner autonomy, feedback and error correction and, finally, growth mindset.

Learner autonomy

According to Nunan (1997) there is a hierarchy of stages of autonomy for learners. These are awareness, involvement, intervention, creation and transcendence. In awareness he says learners ‘are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using.’ He then goes on to say: ‘Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles/strategies.’ It is clear that here we are talking about learners’ perceptions of their success or failure. By empowering them to make their own choices they are gaining ownership of their learning. This is specifically highlighted in what he says about intervention: ‘Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer. Learners make choices among a range of options.’

Feedback and error correction

Giving appropriate feedback and error correction, whether in the form of recasts or more explicit error drills, is, and has always been, fundamental in ELT. As far as adapting error correction to attribution theory, focusing on error type is fruitful. By dividing errors into errors of form and errors of meaning, the teacher can begin by raising learner awareness of typical mistakes and their provenance.

Typical mistakes of form would be the influence of L1 typology, overgeneralization of rules, communication strategies (e.g., simplification, guessing, borrowing from L1), being in a hurry/tired, teaching-induced mistakes (e.g., overloading, incorrect staging, failure to highlight rules/form/meaning, poor instructions), cross-association, and distraction. All of the above can be worked on at a very specific level. They are measurable and can be isolated.

Mistakes of meaning are more difficult to pinpoint as they depend on the intention of the speaker. In this sense, correct linguistic forms are of no use if they don't mean what we want to say. As a consequence, pragmatics is important. The teacher needs to bring out the importance of recognizing that mistakes have hierarchies.

Growth mindset

Lately, mindset has generated a lot of attention in educational circles, but only recently has it begun to penetrate ELT. Dweck (2006) points out that there are two types of mindset: growth and fixed. These mindsets determine how we view the challenges we face. It has been shown (Yeager, 2012) that they have an effect on performance once introduced and drilled. The differences can be seen in the table below where comments typical of a fixed mindset are contrasted to their growth mindset counterparts.

Fixed Mindset

'I'm either good at something, or I'm not.'
 'When I'm frustrated, I give up.'
 'I don't like to be challenged.'
 'When I fail, I'm no good.'
 'Tell me I'm smart.'
 'If you succeed, I feel threatened.'
 'My abilities determine everything.'

Growth Mindset

'I can learn anything I want to.'
 'When I'm frustrated, I persevere.'
 'I want to challenge myself.'
 'When I fail, I learn.'
 'Tell me I try hard.'
 'If you succeed, I'm inspired.'
 'My effort and attitude determine everything.'

Conclusion

Each of the continuums cover powerful psychological concepts that are important for the learner. At the same time, they have clear implications for English language teaching.

SECTION 1: RESEARCH MEETS PRACTICE

The locus of causality determines self-esteem. If I believe I have ability and can achieve success through effort, I have a positive self-concept as a student. Pride results from attributing success to either ability or effort or both. Stability of causality prompts us to believe that either the future is predetermined or it can be changed by effort. If I succeeded because I tried hard, then, if I try hard again, I will succeed again. It is important to note that ability can counteract effort: my achievement was due to native ability, so I don't need to try so hard. Finally, controllability of causality is about taking ownership of learning. The essential idea here is learner autonomy. Ability can help, but what we control directly is the extent of our effort.

The implications of this theory for language learners are clear: in all three continuums of causality the most important individual factor is effort. Research (Bloom, 1985; Gardner, 1983,) shows that high achievers exert huge efforts. It is very important that students believe that if they make an effort – something they completely control – they will achieve success.

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Practice meets research: Exploring what we do

Section 2

NOT English teachers, except when they are: The curious case of oral presentation evaluation rubrics in an EMI-in-HE context

David Block

English-Medium instruction (EMI) lecturers in a range of higher education contexts tend to remain faithful to their identities developed in disciplines, the sites in which:

the important interactions in a professional's life occur, bringing academics, texts and practices together into a common rhetorical locale ... [and] members ... see themselves as having some things in common and being, to some extent, similar to each other. (Hyland, 2012, p. 25)

Importantly, EMI lecturers tend to claim that they seldom, if ever, act as English language teachers (ELTs) in their classes. Instead, they position themselves as deliverers of disciplinary content whose job it is to teach a body of knowledge to their students and socialise them into their relevant 'discourse formations' (Foucault, 1989) and disciplinary communities in which their university studies are situated. They do not deal with ELT duties, such as focusing explicitly on syntax, morphology, pronunciation and lexis, or attending to language functions or disciplinary genre. Repair work, in any shape or form, is seen as outside the realm of what is expected of them and what they are willing to do. Nevertheless, and despite sometime vehement claims to the contrary, EMI lecturers often contradict this version of events as

they clearly engage in the kinds of practices listed previously. Drawing on data collected as part of a funded project exploring the inner workings of EMI in STEM departments at two universities in Catalonia, in this paper I examine how such practices actually take place. Specifically, I focus on EMI lecturers who use rubrics containing elements related to language use to evaluate their students' oral presentations. Here, given word-count restrictions, one example will be provided, that of an engineering lecturer assigned the pseudonym Miquel.

The research team followed Miquel as he co-taught what proved to be a highly technical course on facilities and infrastructures in spring 2018, conducting four interviews, collecting lecturer and student audio-logs (comments about sessions taught/attended) and observing Miquel's teaching on eight occasions. One noteworthy feature of Miquel's classes was that more than 95% of the time was devoted to lecturer-led explanations of engineering problems which had previously been assigned as homework. Making extensive use of the whiteboard, Miquel would generally take students through different formulas step-by-step on the way to solutions. Periodic attempts on his part to include students, either by asking individual students directly or by soliciting questions via the hopeful 'Any questions?', generally led to short answers and silence, respectively. Following the official university policy on EMI, Miquel did maintain English through both his explanations of problems and his ephemeral contacts with students, but the latter were never observed or heard to be using English when verbally interacting amongst themselves. The upshot of this state of affairs is that a student could attend Miquel's classes without ever speaking a word of English. The exception to this pattern was the penultimate day of the course, which was devoted to group oral presentations.

The presentations were based on a hybrid solar plant project developed by groups of 2-4 students and they were delivered in the presence of the rest of the class and the two professors teaching the course. Of interest here is the evaluation rubric employed, which consisted of nine key points to be assessed according to a 0-10 scale. Below I have translated these nine items into English from the original in Catalan:

1. Structure of the presentation: The structure is correct and follows a logical order of the work carried out (intro, objectives, methodology and results, conclusions, etc.)
2. Quality of the oral expression: During the presentation, the student demonstrates the ability to explain, speak calmly and with eloquence.

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3. English quality: The student constructs sentences correctly, which are rich in vocabulary and easily understood, with good pronunciation.
4. Quality of transparencies: They are clear, understandable and show the use of a variety of resources.
5. Variety of resources employed: Different resources (models, videos, images) that help improve audience understanding of the concepts explained.
6. Adaptation of the presentation to the regulation time: The presentation has not exceeded the specified time.
7. Correct results: The results are correct and show that students have worked and understood them.
8. Quality of the answers to the questions posed by the examiners: The answers are appropriate, respond coherently to the questions and show a profound knowledge of the subject.
9. Synthesis of the presentation: The presentation synthesizes the work developed in a suitable way

A quick reading of this rubric shows how several of the items might be situated in the realm of ELT, especially items 1-3 where we see an interest in, respectively, the structure of discourse (and indeed disciplinary genre), speaking fluency, and a command of key aspects of grammar (lexis and pronunciation figure prominently). As for how Miquel operationalised this rubric on the day of the presentations, the research team noted several instances in which he pronounced on what were clearly language issues. In the following excerpt, Miquel invokes the notion of 'correct English' to point out an error in a group's PowerPoint slide:

watch out when you write in English/write in correct English/there is for instance here/playback/instead of payback okay?/so make sure you are writing/the right words/you can always use the/the correctors/your correctors etcetera/ (Miquel, 24/05/18)

On another occasion, he made a comment about a student's disfluency and monotone delivery:

sometimes you were a little bit/I don't know/when you were talking your enthusiasm was too plain/sometimes it was difficult to understand your ehrm/your reasoning/ because you were too like/you need/you lacked a little bit of enthusiasm okay?/some more energy on that/ (Miquel, 24/05/18)

In both these cases, Miquel is making the kind of comments that an ELT might make when evaluating students' oral performance (although perhaps in less direct terms!). However, when it was suggested in an interview that on these occasions he was acting as a *de facto* ELT, Miquel responded as follows:

*it's somewhat subjective criteria because we/.../what we have said/
we are not experts in linguistics but it's something that you see
immediately/.../ that student who speaks clearly/who vocalizes/who
tries to express ideas/who connects sentences/I mean you see it/and
the other one who says something from memory/who without any
effort for/even what he/she is saying/pronounces it correctly/because
it's very easy now to go to google repeat this/ ... /in addition these are
technical words from the project/that you say these/you have to say
them right/I don't know/a conjunctions/or a verb that/but the key
words/you have to pronounce them correctly/because it's what you
have been working on here/and sometimes in my case/a lot of
students come with crib notes/I mean I saw that/they just read
right?/or they try to do without but they don't remember/so they go
there and/or course it's a very poor impression right?/of speech/
(Miquel, 19/02/19; author's translation from the original in
Catalan)*

In this response, Miquel does some interesting positioning work. He opens with a disclaimer, stating clearly that he and his fellow EMI lecturers are not English language teachers, and that they use 'subjective' criteria when evaluating their students' oral performances. Nevertheless, throughout his response he refers to features of language and language use: 'that student who speaks clearly/who vocalizes/who tries to express ideas/who connects sentences', or 'conjunctions' or 'a verb'. At the same time, Miquel is engaged in the task of shifting the *frame* of the conversation – his 'understanding of what it is that is going on' (Goffman, 1974, p. 247) – and his *footing*, or alignment with its content (Goffman, 1981) when he speaks as a discipline specialist who knows a good presentation when he sees one – 'it's something that you see immediately' – and then relates all language issues to disciplinary discourse, using arguments such as 'these are technical words from the project' or 'it's what you have been working on'.

Ultimately, Miquel's self-positioning as 'not an ELT' resonates with what has been argued in other publications based on this research project. In one such publication, Balbina Moncada-Comas and I explain why EMI lecturers systematically resist what we term the 'ELT gaze', a technical term adopted from Foucault (2003) to represent how EMI coordinators and EMI

researchers often impose on EMI lecturers the subject position of ELT. It is with this explanation that I end this short piece.

...we might consider that these EMI lecturers resist the ELT gaze because of deep feelings of attachment and belonging to their respective academic disciplines. These strong links to disciplinary identities have been forged over years of engagement in the discipline-based activities cited by Hyland [(2012)]: attending conferences, supervising students, managing programmes, reading journals, writing books and so on. And their strength means that the suggestion that they do on occasion (or should on occasion) assume an alternative disciplinary identity (ELT), is rejected and resisted. Thus repeated claim – ‘I am not and cannot be an ELT’ – makes perfect sense. (Block & Moncada-Comas, forthcoming).

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Improving writing through content-focused feedback

Rachel Connabeer

Teaching context

I work regularly with learners of English who are also novice essay writers. Many are aiming to study either at a UK university or an EMI institution in another country and so academic writing in English is an essential skill. These learners are generally of a weak intermediate – upper-intermediate level, which usually means that they still experience considerable problems using a variety of both grammatical structures and vocabulary accurately and with flexibility. However, as most practising teachers will recognise, although students may notice their own problems with language range and accuracy, they are less aware of issues with content and organisation.

Whilst teaching academic writing at a university in Germany, I had the good fortune to work with an American colleague who transformed her writing classes by focussing much more closely on constructing an argument. The most inspiring effect of this focus was that the students' language problems seemed to just fall away once they had grasped the need to make an argument. I was interested to see if this approach would be effective with non-European students. To test this, I greatly reduced the amount of class time I devoted to language work and concentrated much more on idea generation and selecting, ordering and linking arguments on specific topics.

Methodology

Content assessment

Rather than use model essays, I felt that it would be more effective to work with writing they had already produced as the concept of drafting will be useful to students in the future. I also wanted it to be possible to compare performance from draft to draft and essay to essay so that students could easily see any progress. For this reason, I decided on two simple numerical systems for scoring the essays, one for content and the other for organisation.

Firstly, to evaluate content I followed a model based on Toulmin (2003) used by Stapleton and Wu (2015) but added the numerical scoring system to help students recognise their progress in subsequent pieces of work. The scores were arrived at by identifying arguments and supporting evidence. These were then assessed and scored as *appropriate* (2 points), *vague* or *weak* (1 point) and *irrelevant* or *no support provided* (0 points). There is therefore no maximum or minimum possible score.

Extract 1. Example from my study samples:

I agree with a dertising because we can see advertising every where now we can see in the phone or in the TV or in the street. For example, I want to the cinma last weekend with me friend and my teachers while we wait the movie we looks more advertising about foods and cars and a lot of thing. Also I watched about BMW advertising before. I dont have any iday about BMW, now I have many Idai about this car and may be I will scale this next year. Although they have a lots of advertising in youtube while when I see the maker maybe I sow 4 or 3 advertising about food or travel. Before 2 yers ago I watched in my laptop advertising about travel anther country and they give bacag for this travel like hotel and car and beautiful places to go around this country, I booked this bacag and I went their. I liked. now when I need to travel, I jast seach about any advertising.

Table 1. Analysis of above sample

Claims	Data / Supporting Reasons
Advertising is ubiquitous	Advertising is on your phone, on tv, in the street, at the cinema
Advertising provides information about a product	This can persuade me to buy/use a product

Table 2. Evaluation of content

Irrelevant (Score: 0)	Does not address the power of advertising other than tangentially.
Weak (Score: 1)	Weak (Score: 1) as only implies power of advertising, but supporting data anecdotal / personal and therefore less convincing.

Consequently, this paragraph scored 2 points (1 point for a weak claim, plus a further point for weak supporting data).

Assessment of cohesion and coherence

Secondly, I used a simplified thematic progression analysis to evaluate cohesion, following Hawes (2015). Lautamatti (1978) states that '[t]he subject of a sentence is usually an element representing its topic' (p. 73). Thus, when analysing the essays, I first identified the subject and then checked that it was representative of the topic. Consequently, this method of analysis depends on understanding the meaning of any particular sentence and then assessing whether this meaning links either to the title of the essay or develops the previous point. Although this process is somewhat subjective, the students in the study were able to write well enough that they could communicate their ideas relatively clearly in most cases. In cases where communication breaks down, the reading experience is disrupted and thus coherence is negatively affected in any case. For this reason, despite the subjectivity involved in assessing the connections between points, I feel confident that the analysis produced meaningful and useful data. The scores were attained by using the following grading scale: Point relevant to title *or* Develops previous point effectively = 2 points; Link to previous point *or* title only tangential *or* Weak development = 1 point; Repetition = 0 points; No link *or* relevance to previous sentence *or* title = -1 point.

Here is the same example paragraph as previously analysed but this time scored according to thematic progression.

1. I agree with a dertising because we can see advertising every where now
2. we can see in the phone or in the TV or in the street.
3. For example, I want to the cinma last weekend with me friend and my teachers while we wait the movie we looks more advertising about foods and cars and a lot of thing.
4. Also I watched about BMW advertising before.
5. I dont have any iday about BMW,
6. now I have many Iday about this car
7. and may be I will scale this next year.

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8. Although they have a lots of advertising in youtube while when I see the maker maybe I sow 4 or 3 advertising about food or travel.
9. Before 2 yers ago I watched in my laptop advertising about travel anther country
10. and they give bacag for this travel like hotel and car and beautiful places to go around this country,
11. I booked this bacag and I went their.
12. I liked.
13. now when I need to travel, I jast seach about any advertising.

Underlined text = topical subject

Table 3. Evaluation of thematic progression

	Topical Subject	Added information	Link Score
1.	I	agree with advertising because we can see advertising everywhere now	-1
2.	We	can see in the phone on in the tv or in the street	0
3.	I	went to the cinema with my friend and my teachers	-1
4.	While we wait the movie we	looks more advertising about foods and cars and a lot of thing.	0 (repeats idea advertising is ubiquitous)
5.	I	watched about BMW advertising	0
6.	before I	don't have any idea about BMW	0
7.	Now I	have many ideas about this car	0
8.	I will	scale this next year	0
9.	Although they have Lots of advertising in youtube	while when I see the maker maybe I saw 4 or 3 advertising about food or travel	0
10.	I	watched in my laptop advertising about travel to another country	0
11.	They	give bacag for this travel like hotel and car and beautiful places to go around this country	0
12.	I	booked this package and I went there	0
13.	I	liked	0
14.	Now when I	need to travel I just search about any advertising	0

This paragraph scored -2 for cohesion and development of ideas.

Using the same two methods, I analysed the same student's final essay (on a different topic) at the end of the 9-week research period.

Table 4. Summary of results

	Essay 1 (before input)	Essay 6 (after 9 weeks of input)
Content analysis	2	11
Thematic progression analysis	-2	6

Results and conclusions

The results of the study were positive as the students improved the quality of their writing. Progress was not faster than would be expected on average. However, I am optimistic that the participants have gained solid essay-writing skills on which to build. With further exposure to English and practice in writing, their language skills will continue to improve, thus improving their writing overall.

By looking closely with students at how they have constructed their texts, we were able to identify what works well in English and what is less appropriate. This goes some way to explaining the positive feedback effect of the simplified Toulmin analysis. The emphasis is on the point that different languages achieve their communicative aims in differing ways, and this does not make the students' native language better or worse than English. I hope to have consciously steered away from an ethnocentric view that English is in some way more 'correct' when compared to any other language and that, in comparison, other languages, or indeed approaches to writing, are deficient.

The biggest single success factor in this study was probably the individual feedback that each student received. Aside from any motivational effects of individual attention, the essay analyses provided students with a clear indication of what they should do differently in their next essay, for example, provide supporting evidence for every example and signal this clearly. It is a clear advantage to receive feedback which is unequivocal and easily implemented.

This research project was first presented in *Modern English Teacher* (29:2) in April 2020 with the title 'Focus on the Content and the Language will look after itself...'

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Basic text statistics and percentage-based instruction in teaching EFL writing classes through user-friendly web-based tools

Evangelia Vassilakou

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore the effects of two lexical measures, lexical density (LD) and lexical diversity (LDiv.), on the language proficiency of advanced EFL learners via authentic essays. It also aims to cover a key area of language performance appearing in most language assessment scales, that of vocabulary. According to Johansson (2008), lexical density “provides a measure of the proportion of lexical items such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in a written text” (p. 61). It is also argued that a high proportion of content words in a text is essential since it “contains more information than a text using a high proportion of function words such as prepositions, pronouns, auxiliary verbs and conjunctions” (Johansson, 2008, p. 65).

Theoretical background

Lexical density and lexical diversity measures

There is a mathematical formula to measure lexical density which is as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of content words}}{\text{Number of total words (content \& function)}} \times 100 = LD\%$$

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The above formula requires the number of content words to be divided by the number of the total words and then multiplied by one hundred. More specifically, low lexical density is below 50%, average is 55% to 65%, and high is over 65%. In other words, a sentence with a high lexical density percentage may be considered a meaningful sentence compared with one with a low percentage, which is vague and has multiple interpretations. With reference to the second lexical measure, lexical diversity, which is defined as “a measure of how many different words are used in a text” (Johansson, 2008, p. 61), a realistic and desirable percentage is 70 %. A high value indicates wide vocabulary range.

Benefits of the two lexical measures

The numerous benefits of using these two lexical measures to teach and evaluate learners’ written production are as follows:

1. Lexical measures can act as a “vocabulary platform” (Johansson, 2008, p. 61) to support learner writing.
2. Writing performance is visualized with instant feedback which “provides teachers with a more accurate picture of lexical progress” (Signes & Arroitia, 2015, p. 555), and especially the development of the writing literacy of a heterogeneous class.
3. Teachers can “reflect on their teaching practices”, and “suitability of their teaching materials” (Signes & Arroitia, 2015, p. 555).
4. Free, reliable and easy-to-use technology is available to assess vocabulary (Signes & Arroitia, 2015, p. 555).

Interchangeability of the two lexical measures

The two lexical measures are *interchangeable* in vocabulary development in writing (Johansson, 2008, p. 61). This means that the richer the lexical density (usage of more lexical words) and the higher the lexical diversity (usage of variety of words), the more successful the texts and essays that advanced level students may produce. The same analogical reasoning applies for the opposite case since the lower the lexical density (use of many grammatical words), and the lower the lexical diversity (numerous repetitions), the less successful the texts produced.

Methodology

Practical application of lexical measures in the EFL writing class

Putting the theory of lexical measures into practice entails the use of web-based applications. The five students in the writing class of 2019 under investigation were required to produce texts of equal length (250-270 words) consisting of four paragraphs. Two drafts were expected so that the teacher could compare development. The first draft was written without the aid of the text statistics site (<https://scoperac.com/textdiver.php>) and the second draft was written in parallel with it while writing. The goal of the particular writing class was to reach a desirable and realistic goal in the redrafted essays, namely to achieve lexical density of no less than 55% corresponding to the passing grade of 65% in the writing exams and lexical diversity of more than 70%.

Results

Main writing techniques used by students for higher percentages

All the students were advised to use the following writing techniques in order to achieve higher percentages of lexical measures in their second drafts:

- combinations of parts of speech (i.e., adjective + noun, verb + adverb)
- pluralization
- the gerund
- addition of more lexical words in a sentence and omission of grammar words
- adverbs rather than set phrases with many grammar words
- complex combinations (i.e., adverb + adjective + adjective + noun)
- synthesis of such techniques in a sentence (i.e., using pluralization plus combinations)

The majority of the students preferred the techniques of adding more lexical words and using more combinations of parts of speech. For example, student 1 changed the phrase from “they have become more and more prevalent” to “tattoos have become a common phenomenon”, which uses four fewer grammar words and three more lexical words. Student 2 added a combination of an adjective and a noun to the phrase “while surfing the Internet”, which became “while surfing countless hours on the Internet”. Some of them synthesized the techniques. For instance, student 5 used two

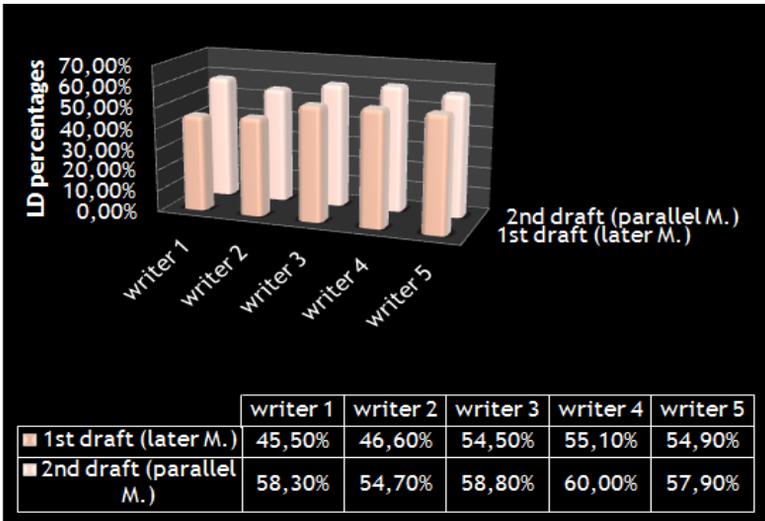


Figure 1. Lexical density graph for authentic EFL texts of advanced level learners

instances of pluralization, replaced a set phrase including grammar words with a single lexical word, and added a combination.

Descriptive statistics for the comparison of first and second drafts

In order to demonstrate the students’ marked improvement, a comparison was made between the five writers’ first and second drafts. Figure 1 below shows

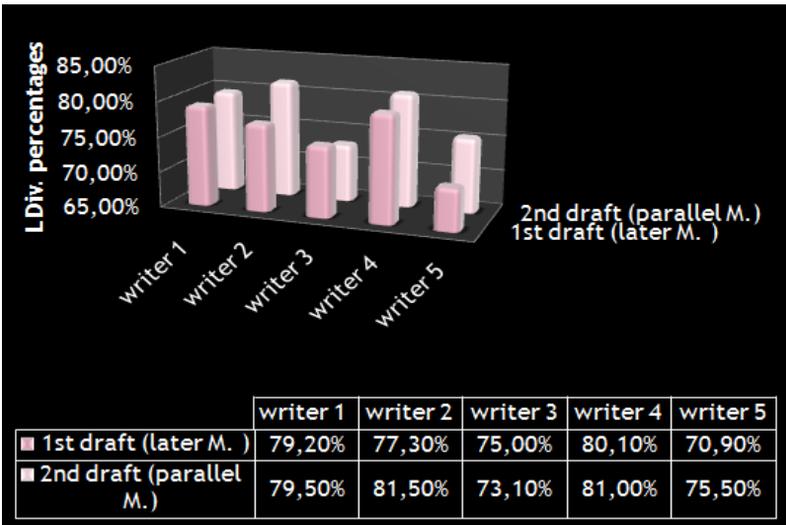


Figure 2. Lexical diversity graph for authentic EFL texts of advanced level learners

that *all* the students made progress in their writing competence in terms of lexical density in their second drafts after usage of the web-based tool.

Likewise, figure 2 below shows that although 4 out of 5 students progressed, they managed to achieve slightly higher percentages from an initial high percentage baseline (70%).

Conclusion

Figure 3 below provides a visual representation of the synergistic power of the lexical measures and their contribution to the development of writing skills when combined.

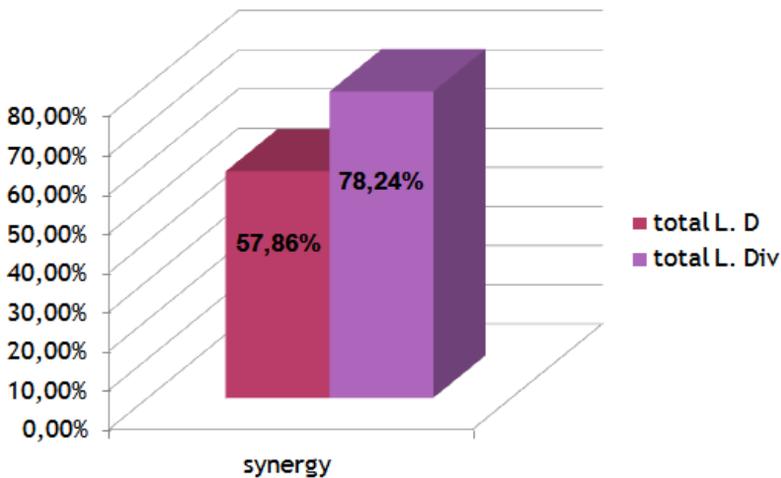


Figure 3. The synergistic power of the lexical measures for a C2 level writing class

It can be concluded that the implementation of the lexical measures under discussion can be effective in the development of writing competency (Kondal, 2015, p. 28). Admittedly, it would be unrealistic to anticipate marked improvements in the production of written texts in a short period of time as it may even take a school year for students to master and systematically receive high percentage results for both lexical measures. Writing is a complex process and other parameters such as readability, grammar accuracy, structure and paragraphing also need to be considered. However, we cannot overlook the helpful role of lexical measures that will continue to gain prominence for eclectic EFL teachers.

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Moodle, older adult learners and communities of practice

Jodi Wainwright

Introduction

Traditionally, studies that focus on older adults have concentrated on cognitive decline. While research into learning among older adults is dominated by the identification of obstacles and decline in the process caused by mental and physical deterioration, recent studies have evidenced the cognitive benefits of learning a foreign language (e.g., Kirk-Sánchez & McGough, 2014), which has increased the appeal of this activity among older adults.

Older Adult Learners are an under-represented group, particularly language learners, and this pilot study contributes to addressing this gap. The research piloted here hopes to extend our knowledge of how older adult learners interpret and experience Moodle and may also help to improve pedagogy for this group of learners in the future.

Background to the study

Use of Moodle

The idea for this study stems from my own experiences of using Moodle for over 10 years now, and how I have seen learners interact with the platform and each other. My observations have led me to believe that the use of Moodle and the activities available creates a strong bond between learners, much in the way that Peachey (2013) describes how platforms such as Moodle can create a strong ‘community of practice’ (see below). Computer-mediated-communication (CMC) can be described as the essential ‘glue’ (Blake, 2005) that holds learners together in distance language learning.

Older adult learners

Various labels have been applied to the more senior generations: The concept of ‘third age’ emerged from a hypothesized sequence of three stages that can be summarised by the acronym EER: education (first age), employment (second age), and retirement (third age) (Moen, 2011). Scholars have defined the onset of the third age differently. Illeris (2004) defines *mature adulthood* as between the ages of 45 and 65. Ramírez Gómez (2016) and Mackey and Sachs (2012) both refer to *older adults* as those over 60 and 65 respectively. In this study the term ‘older adults’ refers to learners aged over 50.

The elderly population is rising and is predicted to reach 1.2 billion in 2025 and 2 billion in 2050. The UN has forecast that the elderly population in Europe will reach 37% of the total population by 2050, and that some countries will have populations with at least 40% of older adults by the same year. Therefore, more research is needed to ensure that pedagogy for this group of learners is informed by empirical studies.

Communities of practice

Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process and the origination of human intelligence in society or culture. The major theme of Vygotsky’s theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Drawing on Vygotsky’s theoretical insights on the social nature of learning, this situates learning within a Community of Practice (CoP) to which we belong or aspire to belong (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Methodology

This study used an exploratory case study methodology, to render a comprehensive account of participants’ perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the learners’ first language, French, to ensure that linguistic proficiency did not have an impact on their ability to respond and allowing them to convey their experiences, thoughts and feelings on a deeper level.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed using NVivo. The interview data were triangulated with analysis of learner activity and production on Moodle. Document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies as it can provide contextual information and enables rich descriptions of phenomena.

Participants

The study took place in an adult learning centre in central France where over 60% of learners are older adult learners. The centre offers courses in a variety of areas including computer skills, accounting and a number of languages;

courses are 1.5 hours per week and run from October to May. This pilot study for my EdD focussed on two learners from an A2 level class, one male aged 65 (Learner 1) and one female aged 72 (Learner 2).

Findings

The findings from the pilot study give us information in the following areas:

- *Participants' feelings about age and learning*

Findings show that older adult learners have mixed opinions about whether or not age is a factor when participating in Moodle.

Q: Do you think Age affects how people participate in Moodle?

L1: No

L2: Yes, I think so.

- *Participants' experience of using Moodle*

Participant responses show that learners have individual preferences for which tools in Moodle they enjoy using and/or appreciate the most.

Q: Do you like certain functions of Moodle more than others?

L1: I know essentially the forum but I am going to go on the other functions to learn English.

L2: The first function which I like in Moodle is that, as I am absent from time to time there is the class which I missed, thus I can go and work by myself. It is good to put things in this sense. Then, sometimes I look for example for Christmas we had did a quiz, so I went to see the quiz again. Things like that are interesting, more than the forum for me.

- *Development of relationships on the platform*

Initial findings indicate that learners appreciate the fact that Moodle provides opportunities for them to interact with information available on the platform and each other, thus enabling learning to take place. Learners' comments, from the interviews, show that getting to know each other better through using Moodle can enable relationships to develop.

Q: How does Moodle influence what you do in class?

L1: It allows me to know the participants better.

Q: Do you know your classmates better because you have used Moodle?

L2: A little bit yes.

Q: How?

L2: We entrust a little on Moodle. Because in class we attend the course we do not participate necessarily with his/her appropriate ideas on his/her personal life.

- *Learning affordances and opportunity for communication*
Learners acknowledge the fact that Moodle can provide opportunities for them to communicate in authentic situations in the target language.

Q: When you see what the others write does that help you or not?

L1: Yes.

L2: Yes, yes.

Q: And how?

L1: Because it allows me to see that they write correctly that teaches me to write better.

L2: I can say just a bit like them, so fine, in the same sense in the same direction. I can be against what they say or for and that allows one to give their opinions. In which way for example, if I did not understand the question, the others' answers can help me to find my own answer.

Conclusion

The results of this pilot study suggest that Moodle can provide opportunities for collaborative tasks, but learners have differing preferences for the variety of functions that are available in Moodle. Moodle provides opportunities for learners to interact outside of formal class time and therefore can support the Community of Practice to which they belong.

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Learning to teach and teaching Greek as a Second/Foreign Language: A preliminary approach on teachers' and student-teachers' perceptions¹

Maria Andria

Introduction

Teaching a Second/Foreign Language (L2) not only has an impact on the learners but also on the teachers, who can view the language classroom as a space of self-evaluation, self-reflection and professional development (Ellis, 2012; Richards & Farrell, 2005). When it comes to student-teachers, that is, to future language teachers, this process becomes even more significant. Taking as point of departure the principles of Action Research (teacher as a researcher) (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993) and Reflective Teaching (Richards & Lockhart, 1996) and how teachers can reflect on their own work in order to gain a better understanding of the process, the present study aims to approach service and pre-service teachers' perceptions on teaching Greek as an L2. Despite its relevance and its important pedagogical implications, this issue has been under-explored in the Greek context. Therefore, the current qualitative study aims to fill this gap in the literature by analyzing, firstly, the way future instructors of Greek view their placements and their beliefs on how this process affects their professional

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development; secondly, the way actual instructors of Greek reflect on their existing classroom practices.

The current study is part of the LETEGR2 (LEarning, TEaching and Learning to Teach in GRreek as an L2: Evidence from different learning contexts) research project, which explores teaching and acquisition of Greek as an L2 in different learning contexts. More specifically, the present study belongs to Study 3 of the above-mentioned project, which is entitled “Learning to teach and teaching Greek as an L2: Teacher education, reflection and development”.

Methodology

The participants of the study are: firstly, teachers of Greek as a Second and as a Foreign Language (n=15) who teach in official institutions/language schools in Athens, Greece and in Barcelona, Spain respectively. Secondly, future teachers of Greek who belong to two groups: (a) one group of students of the Master’s (MA) Program “Teaching Greek as an L2” of the University of Athens, Greece (n=15). This group is enrolled in the one-semester compulsory subject “Practicum: Teaching methodologies- teaching expertise building through classroom observation”; and (b) another group of student-teachers who are carrying out their placement in Spain within the framework of the European program Erasmus Placement (n=10).

Regarding the data collection, the core of the process is classroom observation. In Greece, the process takes place as follows: MA students are exposed to a set of real classes of Greek as an L2. For the majority, this is the first time that they have the opportunity to observe Greek classes *in situ*. These classes are video-recorded. It must be mentioned here that the LETEGR2 project applies a strong research protocol in order to protect the participants’ anonymity. Therefore, prior to data collection, consent forms are distributed to all participants (both teachers and L2 students) and all of them give their written permission for the video recordings. The cameras are placed in the back part of the class and they focus exclusively on the teacher.

After the end of the class, the MA students carry out a semi-structured interview with the teacher of the class where they ask questions stemming from their classroom observation. Once the interview is over, an open discussion takes place between the university professors of the MA subject “Practicum” and the MA students. The aim of the discussion is, firstly, to comment on the teaching strategies that have appeared in the class and, secondly, to relate the observed teaching practices to theories on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) previously taught at the university.

After the discussion, the students have to hand in a report on what they have learnt from the classroom observation with regard to L2 teaching methodologies. Furthermore, the teachers of the above-mentioned video-

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recorded classes also participate in another process: they are asked to watch the video of their class and fill in a self-reflection form. This form has been designed by the LETEGR2 research group specifically for the purposes of Study 3 and includes questions about different aspects of teaching and also about the role of self-observation on teacher professional development. The same process is also followed for the data collection in Spain. In this context, not only actual teachers of Greek, but also student-teachers are asked to video-record themselves and reflect on their first teaching practices as a part of their placement. To sum up, the instruments that are used are video recordings, self-reflection forms, as well as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups.

Preliminary results and discussion

In order to gain some first insights into teachers' and future teachers' perceptions, a qualitative analysis has been carried out. The results come from a content analysis of (a) teachers' self-reflection forms, (b) student-teachers' self-reflection forms, (c) interviews with the Erasmus placement student-teachers, and (d) focus group data with the MA students. The analysis focused on the category "final appraisal/learning outcomes". The preliminary results seem to show that the final appraisal has been positive for all the participants. As far as the MA students are concerned, they positively evaluated their experience and the opportunity that they had to bridge the gap between the theory that they learnt at the university with the actual teaching practice. Regarding the student-teachers' perceptions on their placement, they considered it a very fruitful experience. They also highly appreciated the opportunity for self-observation as a part of their education. As one of the participants explains:

At the beginning, it is very shocking watching yourself on video. There are lots of things that you don't like, from the simplest ones to... Anyway, you find many errors. (...) But it is very important to do it because I think it helps you observe yourself and the aspects that you consider that they had not been done in the correct way.

Actual teachers also provided positive feedback on the process of classroom observation and retrospective self-reflection. They recognized it as an important process of self-examination of teaching practices (Richards & Farrell, 2005), and they seemed to value the engagement with lifelong learning that this process entails. This idea is illustrated in the extract below, which comes from a teacher's self-reflection form:

I feel that it helps me to think more about my teaching practices, even if at the same time I'm exposing myself to my weaknesses; and for

this I might feel a little bit embarrassed about using classroom observation (video recordings) very often. But I deeply appreciate the opportunity that (classroom observation) offers me for self-improvement and professional growth.

Teachers also highlighted the need for peer feedback, as well as the importance of dissociating classroom observation from external evaluation and/or assessment processes.

Conclusions and future research

This study constitutes a first approach to investigate teachers' and student-teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning to teach Greek as an L2. The findings suggest the importance of classroom observation for teacher education, as well as the significance of self-reflection for teacher professional development and growth. Even though teachers and student-teachers at first appear to be skeptical about self-monitoring, they finally seem to recognize the benefits of this process. To conclude, the results of this study support the idea that "teaching practice and reflection shape and fuel each other" (Escobar Urmeneta, 2013, p. 334).

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Why do you do what you do? Teacher and learner beliefs about listening in the EFL classroom

Chiara Bruzzano

Introduction

Listening in English as a foreign language (EFL) is perceived as a difficult skill to develop and, crucially, many school teachers are uncertain as to how best to teach it. In Italy, EFL listening comprehension recently gained some prominence in public discourse with the publication of the results from the new INVALSI exam, a standardised national examination revealing that 40% of students leave secondary school with only a B1 level in EFL listening, with 25% failing to reach B1 (INVALSI, 2019). As no research thus far has collected classroom-based data on this topic, one of the aims of this study was to explore how secondary school EFL teachers teach listening, how they explain their approach, and how this might be harnessed to improve teaching.

Listening in the EFL classroom: beliefs and practices

Listening consists of several complex and overlapping processes. However, the most common model used to explain it encompasses bottom-up and top-down processing. The former consists of decoding a text starting from its smallest units, the sounds, and gradually building up to syllables, words and complete texts, while the latter corresponds to the use of prior knowledge to interpret aural input (Lynch, 2009). Integrating these two processes as needed leads to successful comprehension. When learning to listen, students automatise the processes involved in their listening, requiring progressively less effort and conscious attention (Badger & Yan, 2009). However, rather than supporting learners in developing listening processes, listening

instruction often focuses on the product of listening in the form of correct answers to comprehension questions (Field, 2008). Breakdowns in processing are thus overlooked and students are constantly tested on their existing listening abilities. Further, there seems to be a tendency to over-focus on top-down processes (e.g., making predictions, using context to infer word meanings) as a means to compensate for lower-level comprehension breakdowns, at the expense of a focus on perceptual aspects such as phoneme recognition or lexical segmentation (Li & Renandya, 2012).

To explore the extent to which teachers adhere to this model and their rationales for doing so, this study explored the beliefs held by five Italian secondary school teachers. Beliefs are opinions that “may be consciously or unconsciously held, [are] evaluative in that [they are] accepted as true by the individual, and [are] therefore imbued with emotive commitment” (Borg, 2001, p. 1). Research shows that teachers’ educational beliefs often diverge from their practices. However, this is often because beliefs are elicited in isolation from practice, so they may reflect idealistic views rather than explanations rooted in reality. To tackle this issue, this study provided teachers with evidence of their classroom practice as stimuli for discussion, as illustrated in the next section.

Methodology

This report focuses on the teacher data analysed as part of a wider project exploring the beliefs and practices of five EFL teachers and 105 learners aged 16-18 in a secondary school in northern Italy. Data were collected via surveys, interviews and classroom observations. Each teacher was observed teaching listening four times and interviewed four times. Video-stimulated recall interviews were used, whereby teachers watched excerpts of classroom practice and explained how they made sense of their teaching.

Results

Exploring how and why listening was taught revealed insights into the structure, purposes and processes of listening instruction.

Structure of listening instruction

Listening activities varied in how they were structured. Some teachers adhered to a textbook-driven format including pre-listening (schemata activation, vocabulary pre-teaching), while-listening (first for gist, then for details, with comprehension questions), and post-listening (speaking or learning vocabulary from the listening). Others, however, adopted more unstructured formats, frequently using authentic videos, asking learners to make notes and reconstruct or react to the text individually, in pair/group work and as a class. Different practices appeared to be linked, among other things, to the teachers’

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beliefs about textbooks (with one teacher refusing to use textbooks and others feeling that the learners needed them to feel safe) and to their beliefs about the purposes of listening activities, as explained below.

In some classes, the pre-listening stage extended for most of the lesson, activating the learners' knowledge on the topic of the listening, brainstorming vocabulary or making predictions about the content of the listening. This was connected, in most cases, to the belief that teachers should prepare learners as much as possible before listening to somehow protect them from failure.

Purposes of listening

Listening was mostly conceived of as a means to something else rather than a skill to develop in its own right. Thus, listening was used as a way to learn vocabulary in context (stemming from a general conviction that listening makes for a more engaging activity than vocabulary memorisation) and to present topics for discussion, in line with an overarching belief held by participants that the role of education is to foster critical thinking skills.

Listening processes

Observing the teacher participants lent some support to the notion that while top-down processing is emphasised, bottom-up instruction is lacking. Students were mostly encouraged to listen for gist, focus on key words, and use their world knowledge to compensate for gaps in understanding. Further, the one aspect that was common to all cases was that in the post-listening phase, correct answers were taken as signs of successful comprehension, with little time spent examining difficulties and how these may be tackled in the future. Teachers generally ascribed these practices to a lack of time and to the need for students to focus on answering INVALSI and Cambridge exam questions correctly.

Implications

Despite using a variety of sources and techniques, the teachers in this study viewed listening more as a tool to develop other skills, systems and critical thinking; although this certainly has a place in the EFL classroom, some suggestions to diversify listening instruction might include the following:

- Providing bottom-up practice such as dictation, gap-fill or transcription exercises (Bruzzano, 2018).
- Limiting pre-listening vocabulary work so that learners do not risk over-focusing on vocabulary learned to the detriment of general comprehension.

- Encouraging learners to verify their predictions in light of the words they hear so that they learn to monitor their listening and develop metacognitive awareness.
- Exploring learners' incorrect answers to comprehension questions, identifying the sources of their difficulties and reflecting on how these may be tackled in the future.

Conclusion

The teacher data from this project illustrates a tendency to focus on testing, rather than teaching, listening, driven mostly by increasing high-stakes examination pressures. While this approach may help learners develop test-wise strategies, it may do little to equip them with the tools to deal with the intricacies of the ephemeral stream of speech in real life. Teachers might thus consider introducing more process-oriented practices, such as the ones listed above, into their everyday teaching.

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Using Augmented Reality applications in the integration of learning, teaching and assessment

Yasmine Abdelhamid Atwa

Introduction

The article will discuss the potential of using Augmented Reality (AR) applications in the integration of teaching, learning and assessment. It will provide an overview of multiple mobile applications that help produce a learning environment that is both fun and informative. Given that psychological factors are known to impact students' performance during language learning (Dörnyei, 2005), the apps and use of AR suggested below allow teachers to introduce kinaesthetic learning experiences into class conveniently and economically.

What is Augmented Reality?

Augmented Reality is the technology that overlays information and virtual objects on real-world scenes in real-time (Akçayır & Akçayır, 2017, p. 1). It uses the existing environment and adds information to it to make a new artificial environment. Contrary to popular belief, there is a difference between Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality (VR). AR allows the user to interact with the existing reality, thus making it more meaningful, whereas VR is a computer-generated simulation of real life, which immerses users in a first-hand experience (Augment, 2015).

The aim of my ELTRIA workshop was to provide an overview of multiple AR mobile applications that help produce a learning environment that is engaging and enjoyable, in addition to being effective in providing personalized localized feedback.

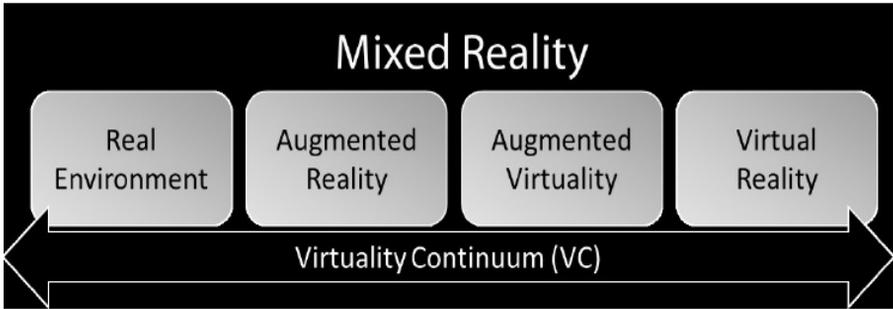


Figure 1. Reality-virtuality continuum by Milgram and Kishino (1994)

Why Use AR in education?

My interest in using AR in class sprang from my continuing classroom observations that students, adults as well as young learners, are increasingly engaged in interactive games. Numerous recent studies and projects use mobile technology to enhance learning (e.g., Kim, 2009; Kukulsa-Hulme, 2009).

As well as maintaining students' attention in class, AR content overlays in course books are available to students outside class. This offers a form of differentiation as students can engage with the content as much or as little as they need to. Furthermore, by using AR, paired with other technologies and practices, teachers can create an entirely new environment where Special Educational Needs (SEN) students can manipulate objects and words throughout a lesson. AR enhances their understanding and comprehension of the subject at their own pace (Chen et al., 2013).

Implementation of the study

Context

The setting for this research was adult and young learners' classes in a language centre. There are anticipated differences in the use of AR applications depending on grade, age level and, other demographic factors (such as socioeconomic status). The age group is important as students are required to have smart phones as well as an internet connection. The AR intervention was not introduced to students under the age of 15 for online safety and child protection reasons. The setting of the research was five adult classes (Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate and 2 Advanced classes) over a 10-week two-term period and five young learner classes (Sec. 1, 2, 3 and two 4) over a 20-week two-term period. Three more teachers took part in the experiment.

Design of the study

The study adopted a pre-test and post-test design to measure retention of course content and development of language skills presented during the AR intervention, as well as learners' aptitude for learning. The pre-test mainly comprised two types: personality and performance tests. Personality tests and interviews were conducted before the beginning of the experiment so as to measure fluency, aptitude and accuracy in English. Performance tests varied depending on the level of the students. The same kinds of tests were administered after the new technology was introduced.

What do teachers need?

Teachers need only forethought along with a backup plan in case technology fails for any reason. Learners need a smartphone or tablet with a back-facing camera along with an AR App. A trigger image (e.g., a picture in class or in students' course books) and an overlay (the content you want your students to interact with), which could be a video, a picture or even a Google doc. An internet connection is essential as well.

How I made AR a reality in my ESL classes

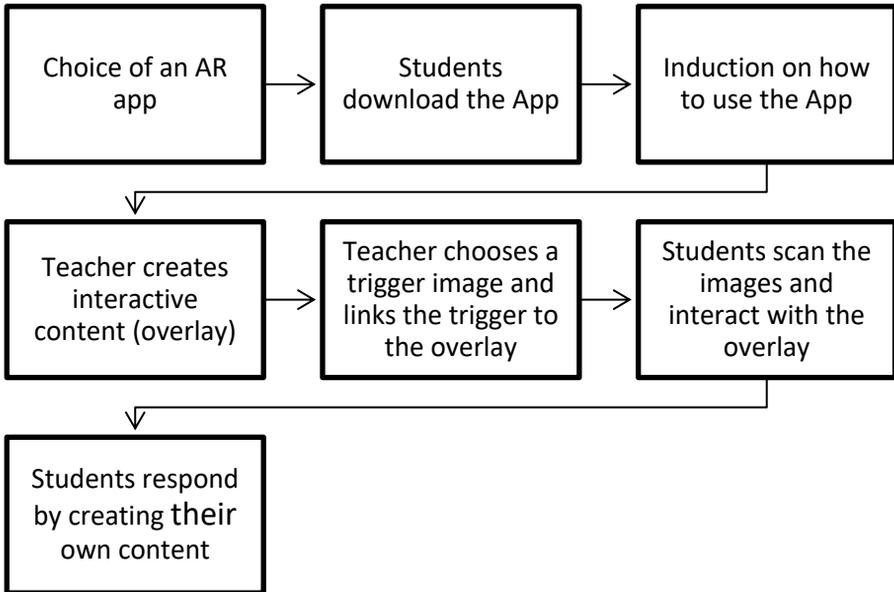


Figure 2. Steps for introducing AR

AR is introduced in class in stages. After consideration of needs and circumstances, the AR application HP Reveal was chosen. Students were asked to download the free app, and a training session was then conducted to

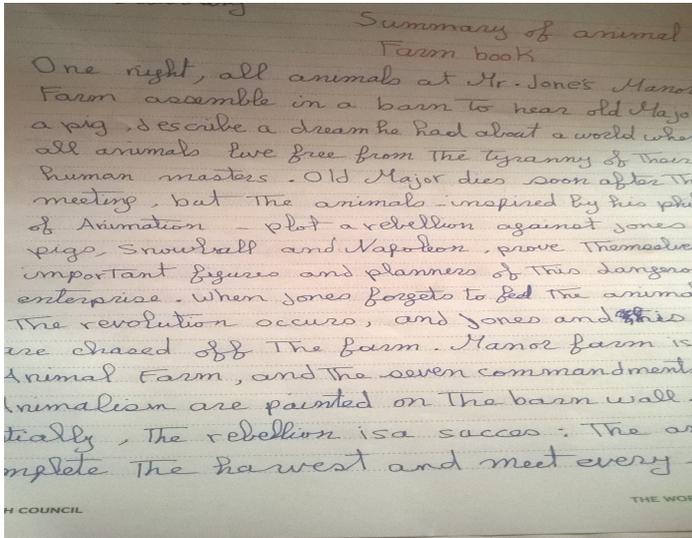
introduce how the app works and how students would be able to create and submit their own work using it.

Classroom walls and textbooks were used as trigger images that would come to life when students pointed their mobile cameras towards them. This method was used in a variety of ways: for language presentation, consolidation and as a means for submitting homework when images were linked to Google docs.

Practical Ideas for using AR in classes

The following list represents some of the ways I have used AR in class.

- Turning reading into listening
Ex. Turning teacher's comments on students' writings into a video where students get to hear the teacher talking about their writing giving examples of how to make the writing better.



- Digital story telling
- AR scavenger hunt
- Interactive magazines
- Definitions for vocabulary
- Tips for learners
- 'Living' posters

Areas to consider when using AR in classrooms

AR is a great medium for language learning but also a source of distractions in itself. Furthermore, in certain educational contexts, the introduction of AR will not be feasible due to the socioeconomic context.

When planning an AR learning activity, the teachers should always involve the target learner groups in the design process, asking for preferences and feedback, and taking skills and knowledge level into consideration. The starting point for an AR learning activity should always be a clear educational objective, which will influence the design of the activity through appropriate choice of tasks and AR features.

Findings and recommendations

In this study, using AR applications in classrooms has proved a huge success in terms of learners' engagement and autonomy. Students described the learning experience with AR as joyful and playful as they had fun playing with AR to learn. Overall feedback suggested an increase in the percentage of their satisfaction in the courses administered and increased interest and interaction. Teachers also noted the logistic benefits of using AR in the classroom, like cost-effectiveness, ease-of-use and time efficiency as teachers' preparation time decreased slightly. The implications for providing localized and personalized feedback using AR are considerable. One example, shared with the ELTRIA workshop participants, was to link a homework sheet as a trigger image to a video created by the teacher listing the positives and the areas to work on in the student's work.

In terms of learning outcomes, post-tests showed an increase in students' speaking competence and a higher level of subject matter retention. As content was tested immediately after the AR intervention, only short-term retention was measured. In addition, most of the students had never used AR in educational contexts before, so a potential novelty effect of the new technology should be borne in mind. More classroom research is needed to focus on both the short-term and long-term impact on students' information retention after learning with AR.

*A reduced version of this chapter was first published in Pattison, T. (Ed.) (2020) IATEFL 2019 Liverpool Conference Selections

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Using WhatsApp beyond the EFL classroom

Elsa Tragant and Jessica Mackay

Introduction

The growth of availability and use of technology has been very fast over the past few years. Consequently, more and more language learners have informal exposure to English on a regular basis, very often through mobile technology. Yet it is less often the case that language teachers are active in promoting the use of technological resources among their students (Van Praag & Santiago Sánchez, 2015). This would explain why there is more research that aims at quantifying out-of-class English language learning through surveys than reports on actual classroom experiences, the focus of the present study.

Lamy and Zourou (2013) make a distinction between the use of social networking in unrestricted situations (where students come into contact with users outside the educational context) and restricted situations (where students interact with each other and the teacher) and they argue that the latter are comparable with face-to-face communication in the classroom.

The present study aims at describing the use of WhatsApp in the context of a restricted situation in order to see to what extent the data actually resembles classroom communication. If it does, we would expect conversations where the teacher mostly takes the roles of initiator and feedback provider, and the student mainly plays a responding role (Fanselow, 1987). We would also expect students to produce full messages in L1 in their informal exchanges, similarly to what students do in groupwork interaction (Hancock, 1997) when they interact with each other without an implied absent audience in mind (like the teacher).

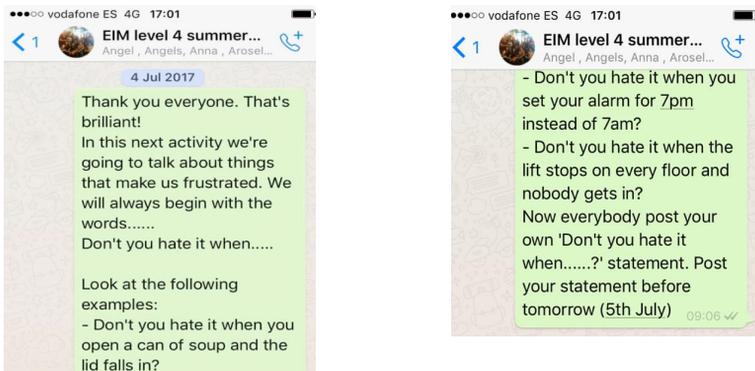
Method

The language teacher in this study, who is also co-researcher, set up a WhatsApp group at the very beginning of a summer intensive English course (CEFR level B2.1) in 2017. Her primary motivation was to come up with a number of language activities that she would send students to complete on a voluntary basis, outside classroom time. The activities came mostly from *Interaction Online* (Clandfield & Hadfield, 2017) and they were independent from the syllabus. The teacher also meant to use the WhatsApp group as a means of direct communication with the students, most of whom were university students between 18–25 years old. 19 of the 20 students in the class agreed to be part of the WhatsApp group and neither they nor the teacher had any objection to sharing their phone numbers. They also gave us permission to reproduce their original messages including their first names. The analysis of the data in this study is based on the student and teacher messages (n= 764) that were produced in the context of the summer course.

Results

On-task messages

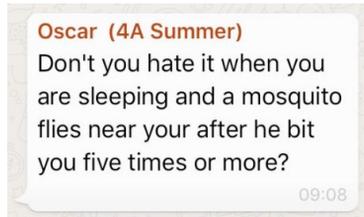
The teacher sent a total of 17 activities, which elicited a total of 475 messages (from here on referred to as ‘on-task messages’) over the course of the five weeks the course lasted. There was an average of 28 messages per activity. The teacher only produced 10% of the 475 messages and most of them were about her setting up the activities. In doing so, the teacher first closed the previous activity (when she felt there was little participation) and then provided a clear explanation of the activity often followed by examples. In closing her instructions, the teacher often set a deadline for students to respond. Occasionally, the teacher also participated by reacting to the content (often with humour) or form (corrective feedback) of students’ messages. The following is an example of how the teacher set up a drill-like activity:



Excerpt 1. Teacher message with instructions

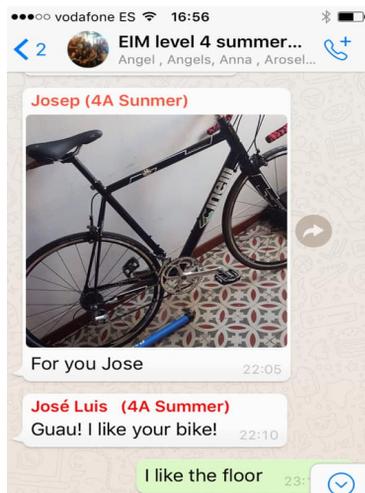
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Student messages (which were 90% of the total) were all written in English and their length often exceeded that of the model sentences that the teacher had provided. For example, in the activity above 7 out of the 20 messages that students produced were longer than the model. The following is one such example where the student also makes use of humour, another feature of some of the messages produced by the students.



Excerpt 2. Student message in drill-like activity

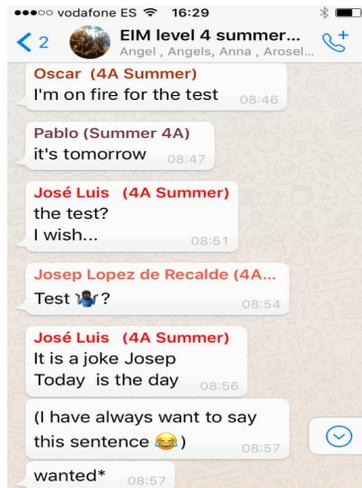
Some of the more open-ended activities sometimes elicited a sequence of connected messages that exceeded the teacher's instructions in terms of the length of the conversation. A case in point comes from an activity where students were asked to post a photo of part of an object for the rest of their classmates to guess. In the example below, the object in the photo was guessed right away by José Luis but the conversation continued with an additional 10 messages. The conversation ended with José initiating a message where he posts a full picture of his bike (something the teacher had not asked students to do) followed by two reaction messages, one by a student and another by the teacher.



Excerpt 3: Student and teacher messages in guessing activity

Off-task messages

The use of the WhatsApp group outside the teacher-initiated activities (from here on referred to as ‘off-task messages’) was not infrequent and included a total of 289 messages. Practically all of these messages were written in English. Except for one message, the rest were related to the class to some extent (i.e., homework, final exams, public transport to get to school, organization of class lunch, etc.) and their frequency increased over time as students got to know each other better. The off-task conversations that the teacher initiated tended to be shorter than the student-initiated conversations, which were more frequent. The following excerpt comes from a student-initiated conversation including 17 messages.



Excerpt 4. Student-initiated ‘off-task’ exchange

As can be observed from the above example, the register in some of these off-task messages is more casual (i.e., short sentences, use of emoticons) than in on-task messages. However, the use of self-repairs was infrequent in both on-task and off-task messages.

Conclusions

A total of 764 messages were produced over the course of a five-week English class in a Whatsapp group that the language teacher initially created with the idea of sending tasks for students to complete outside class time. In practice, the Whatsapp group was also used to a larger extent by both the teacher and mainly the students to communicate with each other more informally. Examination of the on-task messages shows that students produced meaningful messages that exceeded the teacher’s expectations in terms of their elaboration and the length of the conversations. Examination of off-task messages shows that they bear little resemblance to the more restrictive teacher and student roles often found in whole-group classroom interaction.

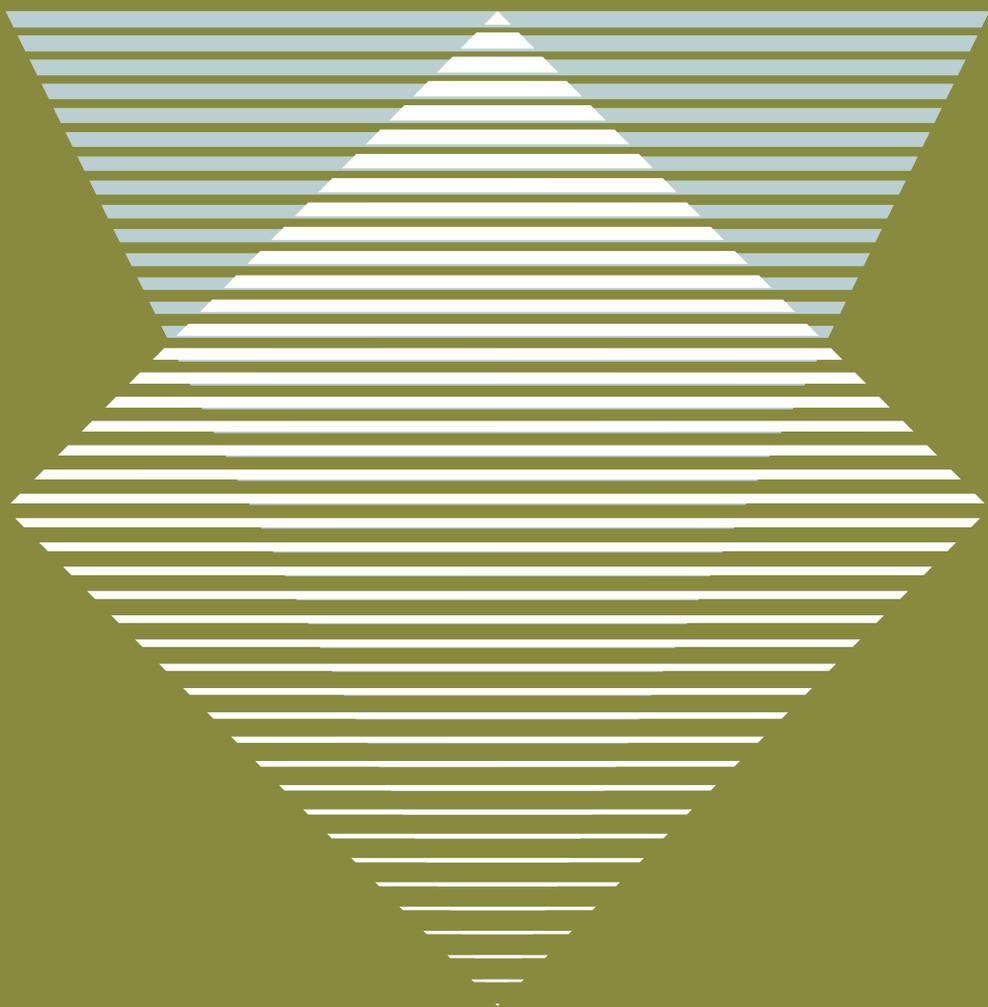
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Other differences with classroom interaction are common in on-task and off-task messages like the exclusive use of messages written in English or the little explicit attention to form by both the teacher and student.

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**Key issues in ELT:
Debate and discussion
within the field**



Section 3

ELT in Barcelona: The current state of affairs

Melanie Brennan and James Venner

Introduction

The current study was conducted by members of Serveis Lingüístics de Barcelona (SLB), a cooperative of language professionals. Interactions between local members and teachers in the area indicated widespread discontent with the current state of affairs of ELT in Catalonia. Frequently cited issues included precarious working conditions, lack of transparency in hiring practices and pay scales, limited opportunities for professional growth, and entrenched marginalisation of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs).

An integral part of SLB's vision as a cooperative is to advocate for equal opportunities and fair working conditions in our profession. In order to gain a better understanding of the current situation in Barcelona, it was deemed necessary to go beyond anecdotal information and gather more detailed data from the ELT community by means of an online survey.

Method

The survey was drafted in relation to the following areas: teacher demographics, teaching background, working conditions and reflections on the ELT industry. This draft survey was first piloted with cooperative members in order to collect feedback and subsequently redrafted. The final version consisted of 26 questions, requiring a mix of quantitative and qualitative responses. The survey was published using the online tool SurveyMonkey and distributed among English language teachers working in the Barcelona area. Participants were recruited by word of mouth, email and via social media platforms (namely Facebook and Twitter). The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete and no monetary incentive was given.

Findings

A total of 190 individuals completed or partially completed the survey. This is a sizeable sample; however, a degree of self-selection bias cannot be ruled out, as a participant's recruitment would likely rely on some engagement with the ELT community and an interest in the issues covered in the survey. Therefore, the findings should be viewed as indicative, rather than representative of the current ELT population in Barcelona.

Teacher demographics

In terms of gender, around two thirds of respondents were female and one third were male. Ages ranged from early twenties to over sixties and the most numerous age group was 30-39. Nearly 80% of respondents described themselves as native speakers of English. Of these, 64% reported having a working level of Spanish (B2) or above, whereas only 14% had a comparable level of Catalan.

Teaching background

Regarding qualifications, 78% of participants had a Bachelor's degree and 23% had a Master's degree in a related field (e.g., education, languages, linguistics). Additionally, 68% had an initial teaching certificate (e.g., CELTA, TESOL) and 23% had an advanced teaching certificate (e.g., DELTA, DipTESOL). Years of teaching experience varied greatly, from less than one year up to 38 years, with an average of around 10 years. Lastly, about two thirds of respondents said that they had undertaken some form of professional development in the last 12 months.

Employment status

The second part of the survey explored the different teaching contexts of respondents, based on their type of employment, i.e. private school contracted, public school contracted, freelance or informal (cash in hand). As *Figure 1* shows, there was significant crossover between the different sectors, with many respondents belonging to more than one group.

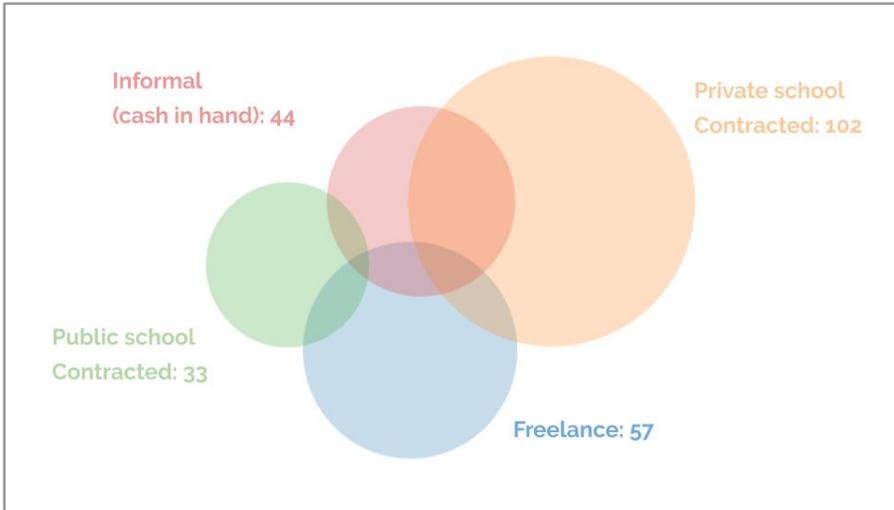


Figure 1. Visual representation of employment status of respondents

Teacher profiles

Private school contracted

Of the 102 participants formally contracted to a private school or language academy, only 25% had an indefinite contract (continuous), 47% earned between €11-15 per hour (net), and 51% supplemented their income with additional teaching.

Public school contracted

Of the 33 participants formally contracted to a public school or institution, 58% had an indefinite contract (continuous), 62% earned €11-15 per hour (net), and 23% supplemented their income with additional teaching. Furthermore, 23% did not receive any paid holidays.

Freelance

Of the 57 participants who were self-employed (freelance), 51% had seven or more different employers or clients, 65% worked in seven or more different locations, and 65% usually earned between €20-€30 per hour (gross).

Informal (cash-in-hand)

While only nine participants reported working exclusively on a cash-in-hand basis, 23% of all participants indicated that they did some informal work to supplement their income.

Teacher reflections

In this section of the survey, qualitative responses were collected about participants' experiences and opinions of working in ELT in Barcelona. Participants were first asked to list the factors which led them to becoming English language teachers. Some common themes were a love of languages, opportunities to travel, flexibility in combining with other work, and enjoyment of teaching people from diverse backgrounds.

Participants were next asked to describe any negative experiences of working as a language teacher in Barcelona. Here is a representative selection of the responses:

"I feel frustrated with the steady flow of seasonal or one year English teachers and the lack of regulations in the market"

"Zero hour contracts. nine month contracts. Early starts and late finishes. Occasional racism - you don't look like a Native speaker"

"We have no job security and schools often don't really care about professional development."

"Outrageous job offers (10-12 per hour), lots of unpaid administration work, being fired then rehired every year."

Finally, participants commented on the changes that they would like to see within the ELT industry. Some of their answers included:

"An open mind when it comes to different teaching methods and more acceptance of near-native teachers."

"Salary rates on a scale linked to experience and what you offer."

"A support system, especially for new teachers. A place where teachers can share lesson ideas, problems and solutions."

"Mass unionisation of teachers first and foremost, followed by collective bargaining to improve pay, conditions, job security, etc."

"Licensing and minimum educational standards for companies to operate as academies."

"A higher entry-level standard to avoid a race to the bottom with wages in a saturated market."

Discussion

As reported, responses were gathered from 190 individuals. It is unclear what proportion of Barcelona's ELT population this sample constitutes, as the number of English language teachers working in the city is constantly fluctuating and thus very difficult to estimate.

Another caveat concerns the possibility of self-selection. Despite the fact that all responses were given anonymously, not everyone is forthcoming when discussing working conditions, especially when that work is unregulated or illegal. Therefore, it is likely that low-paid, informal workers are greatly underrepresented in our findings.

Rates of pay

Participants reported rates of pay ranging from €7/hour to €100/hour. This disparity in earnings is commonplace in many job markets and to a certain extent reflects the variation among practitioners, in terms of experience, qualifications and expertise. However, our data show that a significant proportion of respondents are on contracts which provide less than the living wage of €1206.91/month for the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017). For example, 51% of respondents working in a private school or language academy and 28% of those working in a public school or institution indicated earning €1000 or less per month. Consequently, 51% of privately contracted and 23% of publicly contracted teachers opt to supplement their income by undertaking additional work.

Precarity

Besides unsatisfactory salaries, a general lack of job security was another key issue expressed in the qualitative section of the survey. From the responses, it is clear that workplace precarity can take on many forms. For example, some respondents reported being on zero-hour contracts, having no fixed hours and being *"fired and rehired"*. This was particularly evident for privately contracted teachers, as only a quarter enjoy the security of an indefinite contract.

As for freelancers, one respondent stated that *"going autónomo (freelance) seemed the only option to earn a professional wage"*, but went on to describe it as *"inherently precarious"*. Our findings indicate that teachers with freelance status are able to earn a higher hourly rate, but this does not take into account taxes, social security payments and the cost of travelling to different locations.

Discrimination

Unfortunately, with only 21% of the participants in this study identifying as non-native speakers of English, there was not a great amount of data on the treatment of NNESTs in the workplace. However, eight respondents reported negative experiences of a discriminatory nature, including recruiters being less likely to hire teachers if they were not native English speaking teachers (NESTs) or, indeed, not *“looking like a native speaker”*; unreasonable preferences from schools and parents for NESTs, regardless of their qualifications or experience; and, in general, a focus on providing students with NESTs over quality education.

Regarding desired changes to the industry, nine respondents from both groups reported that they would like to see more respect for NNESTs, an end to employers *“chasing a nonsense picture of a native speaker”*, and *“fewer unqualified teachers”* occupying positions, as they claim too many teachers are being hired *“solely on the basis they are native”*.

Looking forward

While limited in scope, this study portrays a fragmented industry, which fails to offer stability and a living wage to a large proportion of teachers. Nevertheless, approximately half of the respondents who answered the final part of the questionnaire said they see themselves continuing to work in this profession in the mid to long term.

Participants were unequivocal in discerning the main problems with ELT in Barcelona, but also vocal of what they would like to see change. From the analysis of the qualitative responses, four core areas were identified:

- *Fairness and transparency* – respect for and inclusion of NNESTs, transparent hiring practices, fair salaries and pay scales that are linked to qualifications and experience
- *Collectivism and regulation* – unionisation, collective bargaining, licensing of employers
- *Greater collaboration* – a support system, a place where teachers can share ideas, problems and solutions
- *Higher professional standards* – increased entry-level requirements to language teaching, opportunities for continued professional development

Conclusions

This study aims to highlight, in part, the current state of affairs and convey the opinions of the local ELT community. The issues of low pay, workplace precarity and discrimination are not exclusive to our profession, nor are they exclusive to the Barcelona area. However, it is our hope that this report may

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be the first step in documenting the issues many English teachers in Barcelona face, leading to greater awareness and eventually better working conditions. Of course, further research is needed, here and elsewhere, to compare the realities of practitioners in different contexts and share solutions to common problems.

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Some considerations on the use of students' own language in class

Encarnación Pérez Pulido

Introduction

The aim of this contribution is to discuss the state of the art: the whens and hows of the use of the students' own language in class from a guilt-free point of view. Discussing the use of the learners' mother tongue in the classroom has long been taboo. Acknowledging that most, if not all, of us probably have that skeleton in our closet has traditionally been an embarrassment and a recognition of failure to follow the long sought-after 'English only' policy. This article attempts to shed some light on the different ways and situations where L1 use in the classroom can help raise students' language awareness.

Discussion

Early editions of some popular teacher-training handbooks by Harmer, Scrivener or even training courses such as CELTA paid very little attention to the use of the students' mother tongue in class. Both writers, however, have included some sections on L1 in more recent editions of their manuals. However, this is just a small sample of the amount of literature published on this topic in the last twenty years.

Obviously, not all authors are in favour of using the learners' own language. Some (e.g., Atkinson, 1987, p. 246) warn of the dangers of overuse, while others (e.g., Newson, 1998, pp. 63–64) offer a list of arguments against L1 use in class; among them, interference or not achieving what he considers “generally accepted foreign language teaching aims”.

Nevertheless, and despite these concerns, it is now easy to find debates and presentations on the topic of using the students' own language and translation activities in EFL/ESL classes at conferences, seminars, round tables, webinars

related to language teaching, applied linguistics, or teacher training around the world.

Why and when did using the students' own language in class become taboo? As Richards and Rogers claim (2001, pp. 5-7), translation featured as the central axis of pedagogical procedure in the earliest described foreign language teaching methodology, the well-known *Grammar Translation* method. According to the authors, it is difficult to find supporters of the method nowadays, although some "contemporary texts for the teaching of foreign languages at college level often reflect *Grammar Translation* principles. These texts are frequently the products of people trained in literature rather than in language teaching or applied linguistics" (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 4).

At the other end of the spectrum, we find the *Direct Method*, which frowned upon L1 in favour of L2. This led to avoiding translation and the use of students' own language in the classroom at all costs. Instead of translation, form-meaning associations were established using real objects, pictures, or demonstration. The teacher's role was to maintain an extended conversation with the learners in the target language. The *Direct Method* and all its variants also helped to favour the superiority of native English-speaking teachers over non-native teachers, since there was no need to know the students' own language in order to teach the target language in any part of the world. Furthermore, *sounding native* was also one of the basic premises of the method, with inevitable repercussions on learners' cultural identity.

Recently there has been increasing acknowledgement of the value of non-native English-speaking teachers (henceforth NNEST); for example, in the plenary sessions given by Silvana Richardson at the IATEFL conference in 2016 or by Péter Medgyes at the 33rd Annual APPI Conference in 2019. This movement is supported by organizations such as Equal Voices in ELT, created to recognise both gender and highly proficient speaker parity in keynotes and plenaries in ELT conferences and events worldwide, as can be read on their website (<https://evecalendar.wordpress.com/>). Furthermore, one of the main aims of the TEFL Equity Advocates and Academy (<http://teflequityadvocates.com/>) "is to encourage schools and organisations to establish egalitarian employment policies which will give equal opportunities to both *native and non-native* English speaking teachers".

Widdowson (2003, p. 150) states that while we teachers try to keep the two languages separate, the students will undoubtedly keep them in contact in their own minds. If we assume that this will happen anyway, why not take advantage of it? Why not use this to our own benefit and make it productive and useful? Why don't we use translation in class to help raise awareness? The own/new language connection in a learner's mind is an indisputable fact of life: the learner's own language is a reference system for the new one. Whether

we like it or not, translation and students' own language are used every day in every classroom where a second language is taught, if not by the teacher, then by the students. When learning a different language, translating is such a natural process that denying it or rejecting it can be counter-productive and denies learners a valuable resource.

The perfect scenario would include an efficient use of translation in the classroom – by contextualizing it, for instance. Of course, as teachers we should be careful with how much own-language we use, for the overuse of those activities may restrict the students' exposure to the target language. When and how often to use translation will depend on the level and proficiency of the students.

Fortunately, in many contexts, restrictions on using the students' own language have been abandoned, or are in the process of being abandoned. Despite the supremacy of the *Direct Method*, and the *English-only* policy (with all its implications) and the concurrent rejection of bilingual teaching, use of the students' mother tongue and translation in class is gaining recognition as an effective tool in EFL. It consolidates learning and facilitates the process of comprehension. By helping learners to grasp complex concepts, insecurity is reduced, contributing to a good rapport in class and reinforcing students' self-esteem.

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“Doing it by the book”: Exploring tensions between classroom practice and classroom agents’ beliefs towards grammar instruction

Tom Flaherty

Introduction

What prompts teachers to adopt certain procedures in their classrooms when teaching grammar? One factor is the development of beliefs that affect a teacher’s decision-making, otherwise referred to as their practical discourse (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). These beliefs appear to be influenced through other discourses coming into conflict with the practical discourse: top-down pedagogic and research-based discourses shaped through teacher training and academic literature respectively (collectively referred to as a theoretical discourse); and a bottom-up personal discourse influenced through previous language teaching experience. To what extent though do a teacher’s knowledge, beliefs and skills concerning teaching and learning influence a teacher’s practical discourse during grammar lessons? Indeed, how far do the attitudes of learners and the use of materials impact teacher cognition?

With regard to the influence of teacher cognition on grammar instruction, a number of studies exist charting their influence on teaching grammar (see Borg, 2003 for an extensive review of these studies). Some studies also suggest teachers and learners have varied beliefs concerning grammar (Loewen et al., 2009; Schulz, 1996, 2001), and argue that these discrepancies need to be dealt with so as to increase the “pedagogical face validity” (Schulz, 1996, p. 349) of grammar instruction as perceived by learners. Are there other factors, then, that could influence a teacher’s classroom practice? What about coursebooks? Akbari (2008) argues we have entered “an era of textbook-defined practice”.

This is not to say that teachers do not adapt or supplement coursebooks (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018). Shawer (2010) argues that teachers operate within the parameters of a *curriculum continuum*, of which there are three positions: curriculum-developers, curriculum-makers and curriculum-transmitters. Curriculum-transmitters follow a prescribed coursebook with little attempt to adapt material, curriculum-makers design negotiated syllabi, in which a prescribed coursebook is not used, and curriculum-developers either use the coursebook as a platform from which to launch into other sources of input, or “cherry-pick” units in a “flexible order” (Shawer, 2010, p. 181).

Research questions

Arguably, teacher cognition, learner beliefs and coursebook materials all play a considerable role, and whilst the interactional relationship between these three agents may be a complex one (Bolitho, 1990), it is nevertheless one that deserves analysis, and one that has been overlooked in the literature. As such, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent is there a relationship between teachers’, learners’ and coursebook writers’ beliefs on grammar instruction, and if so, are there any tensions?
2. How far does the relationship between teachers’, learners’ and coursebook writers’ beliefs towards grammar learning influence classroom practice?

Methodology

Three coursebooks at intermediate (B1) level were selected based on their grammar approach. Teachers participating in this study were a convenience sample of three EFL teachers, working at language schools in Barcelona. The teachers taught classes of between 9 to 18 adult learners ranging from 18 to 60 years old. Neither teachers nor students chose the coursebooks; that responsibility lay with their respective schools.

The study triangulated data over a period of three months. Teachers, learners and coursebook writers all completed a questionnaire eliciting beliefs on grammar instruction which were then corroborated through classroom observations, coursebook analysis, and semi-structured preliminary and follow-up teacher interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and field notes were used instead of video recording in accordance with teacher preferences and a desire to avoid teachers adopting artificial behaviour. The questionnaire was designed using statements by Graus & Coppen (2016) and Spada et al. (2009), with some phrasing adapted slightly.

Results

The findings suggest teachers', learners' and coursebook writers' beliefs concerning grammar instruction are not always aligned with classroom practices. With Coursebook 1, tensions emerged between the teacher and the learner because of the coursebook's dominant agency in the classroom. The teacher functioned as a 'curriculum-transmitter', not deviating from the coursebook's explicit rule-based explanations, thus relinquishing their preference for inductive instruction due to the coursebook's 'practical nature'. Despite learners having similar beliefs about grammar as those in the coursebook, their preference for more communicative activities was inhibited.

Tensions emerged between all three agents in the classroom using Coursebook 2. Firstly, even though both the coursebook and teacher favoured inductive form-focused instruction, the teacher deviated from the book when the rule explanation was deemed insufficient or too complex. Secondly, despite the learners viewing the coursebook as an important resource, they had mixed feelings towards its grammar approach. Finally, the teacher's self-confessed limited grammar knowledge meant some learners felt their additional explanations were inadequate. Regardless, the coursebook was still the dominant agent in the class, accentuated by the teacher's obligation to use it due to the integrated nature of the grammar activities, the learners having bought it, and an inability to provide better rule explanations.

Despite both the teacher's and learners' dislike of Coursebook 3's grammar approach, the teacher's obligation to use the coursebook (as learners had spent money on it) exacerbated tensions between all three agents. Firstly, a misunderstanding of the book's pattern-based grammar approach meant it wasn't exploited effectively by the teacher. Secondly, neither the grammar reference nor supplementary materials were used to counter the teacher's issue with the brief grammar explanations in the book, instead providing their own explanations based on limited explicit grammar knowledge. Clearly, tensions were influenced by the coursebook's dominant agency in the classroom, and the teacher's inability to fully exploit and supplement the material to present the grammar.

Discussion

Why do teachers more often than not adopt a coursebook's grammar approach despite conflicting beliefs? When an explicit approach is considered practical despite a teacher's conflicting belief, it may be impractical to go against the coursebook. Teacher knowledge may also be a factor, with a limited knowledge of explicit grammar knowledge leading to a reliance on resources such as coursebooks. Further, the more the grammar is integrated into a reading or listening activity, the more difficult it is for the teacher to adapt the material to suit their teaching contexts.

Disparities between teachers and learners emerge in this study, especially in the class using Coursebook 3, suggesting that previous language learning experience plays a significant role. This may explain why Coursebook 1, influenced more by learning experiences from a student's perspective, enjoyed more popularity in this study than Coursebooks 2 and 3, which were influenced more by teacher or researcher perspectives. With the majority of learners unable to positively relate the approaches adopted by Coursebooks 2 and 3 to previous language learning experience, tensions were likely to emerge.

The interplay between coursebooks, teachers and learners is a complex one, with this study demonstrating materials occupy a hierarchical position in the classroom (Bolitho, 1990). With modern coursebooks integrating grammar activities into skills-based activities, the teacher becomes increasingly reliant on the coursebook, even if it does not align with the other agents' beliefs. The teacher needs to address this discrepancy by adapting the coursebook to their and their learners' needs. This requires training, however, and schools, publishers and teacher training providers must do more to ensure that teachers remain agents in the classroom by providing them with the skills to successfully exploit coursebooks.

Further, if the coursebook's approach is at odds with learners' beliefs, attempts to manage these beliefs need to be made – by ignoring them, tensions will surely have a negative impact on student learning outcomes. Publishers produce coursebooks involving the presentation of discrete forms based on feedback from students' desire for grammar, and this leads to a certain degree of expectation that writers promoting less conventional grammar approaches find difficult to counter. By attempting to merge more holistic approaches towards grammar instruction with traditional designs and teaching models, tensions are likely to emerge within classrooms, and without reform from external agents such as schools, teacher education programmes and publishers, these tensions will persist.

Conclusion

Findings from this study correlated with previous studies comparing teacher and learner beliefs on grammar instruction with classroom practice, and those analysing coursebook use. However, it also expanded on the current literature by revealing that despite learners and teachers favouring some degree of grammar instruction in the classroom, tensions emerged predominantly because of the coursebook's dominant agency in the classroom. Therefore, this article argues that classrooms are not just influenced by the beliefs of teachers and learners, and future research needs to reflect this. Despite limitations to the study, there are pedagogical implications arising from this study, including the importance of designing materials and teacher training programmes that provide teachers with the knowledge and flexibility to adapt coursebooks

according to their own contexts. Further, previous research has argued learner and teacher beliefs need to be aligned so as to not have an adverse effect on learner outcomes (McGrath, 2013). This study would argue this is also valid for other agents involved in the ELT learning process, including schools and publishers.

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ELT RESEARCH IN ACTION:

Bringing together two communities of practice

This book is based on the second ELT Research in Action Conference (ELTRIA). Organised by the Escola d'Idiomes Moderns (School of Modern Languages) at the University of Barcelona, the conference took place on the 26–27 April, 2019 and included talks and plenaries from presenters from a diverse range of geographical locations and teaching contexts. One of the principal aims of the ELTRIA conference is to provide an opportunity for researchers and practitioners to come together to share experiences and common goals.

This volume is a collection of chapters which summarise and reflect on a selection of the ELTRIA presentations. Divided into three sections, it looks at how theory can be applied to ELT classrooms, explores current practice by means of practitioner-led classroom research and discusses topical themes of interest to ELT professionals at a grassroots level. The book is relevant to teachers and researchers alike and hopes to contribute to bringing together these two communities of practice.

