

Additional 'tools' for teacher research

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Research tools as pedagogical tools

A fundamental principle of Exploratory Practice (EP) is that ‘research’ should not interfere with ‘teaching’ and that we should integrate the work for understanding our learners and classroom language learning into our normal teaching practice

This means we should not impose extra demands on our learners for the sake of gathering research data – i.e. all research tools should also (even primarily?) be pedagogical tools

Non-pedagogic research tools

But what might be the value of using other 'non-pedagogic' research tools to gather insights from our learners?

- E.g. interview data, focus group interviews, questionnaires ...


What might be the value of temporarily putting on a 'researcher hat' instead of a 'teacher hat' to understand our learners?

Gaining a sense of 'otherness'

Perspective transformation
(Boud et al. 1985)

Researcher objectivity versus teacher subjectivity

Stepping back from our (evaluative) 'teaching' role and relationship with our learners and listening to their voices in a more open and objective way

Teacher

Student relationship

Researcher

Informant relationship

e.g. Using focus groups

Wei 2011 (Understanding learner autonomy through practitioner research. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick)

Used focus group discussions with students (outside class time) as an 'additional' tool for exploring their understandings and perspectives

‘The participation in FG interviews allows the students to play the role of an expert and the teacher then becomes the learner listening to how students evaluate the learning process’.

(Wei 2011: 252)

‘[T]hrough analysing FG interviews, my role as a researcher enabled me to listen to students’ voices which I would not have paid attention to as a teacher. I found that I made a common teacher mistake in finding convenient excuses like laziness to justify why certain tasks did not work [...] my role as a researcher helped me to gain a different perspective including withholding immediate judgement as a teacher so that I could perceive students’ learning in its own right’. (Wei 2011: 254)

Additional tool for analysis: I-statements

What is I-statement analysis?

A form of discourse analysis that examines how people speak or write in the first person to express actions, feelings, abilities, goals ... and how they construct particular socially situated identities through language (Gee 2005: 141)

I-statements are categorized on the basis of type of predicate following 'I'

Example: interviews with teenagers (Gee 2005)

cognitive: *I think ..., I know ..., I guess*

affective: *I want ..., I like ...*

state vs action: *I am mature, I hit him
back, I paid the bill*

ability vs constraint: *I can't say anything
to him, I have to do my paper route*

achievement: *I challenge myself, I want
to go to MIT or Harvard*

Why a useful tool for understanding our learners?

Learner stories, histories, reflective writing, self-evaluations, interviews, etc. are typically voiced in the first person 'I' or 'we'

Silverman's (2001: 222) charge of 'anecdotalism' re qualitative data analysis

I-statement analysis enables us to represent dataset of reflective writing comprehensively and systematically

Fang & Warschauer 2004

I-statement category	Example	Frequency
Action	'I put forward my ideas ...'	67.1%
State	'I was responsible for ...'	10.9%
Ability	'I acquired new skills ...'	8.0%
Constraint	'I could not express it ...'	7.6%
Cognition	'I strongly believe ...'	4.3%
Success	'I am proud of our work ...'	2.9%

5-year case study of technology and curricular reform
(university in eastern China)

Student evaluations in 'English for Tourism' class

CUTE 2 Project 2005–07

eChina~UK <http://www.echinauk.org/> [Ushioda 2008, 2010]

I-statement category (<i>with sample statements</i>)	No. of I-statements	% frequency
THOUGHTS, BELIEFS AND FEELINGS ABOUT LEARNING OR USING ENGLISH <i>I think English is very important to me; I think practice is the only way</i>	75	27.8%
PERSONAL GAINS <i>I feel more confident; I learned a lot</i>	62	23.0%
NEEDS, SHOULD AND MUSTS <i>I must know English well; I need more practices</i>	43	15.9%
FUTURE GOALS AND INTENTIONS <i>I will make an extra effort; I intend to further my study</i>	34	12.6%
CONSTRAINTS AND PROBLEMS <i>I have no much time to learn English; I'm very busy</i>	22	8.1%
ACTIONS AND EXPERIENCES <i>I keep learning all the time; I often attend international conferences</i>	21	7.8%
THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT CUTE 2 <i>I suggest we increase more interacting activities; I like the forum</i>	13	4.8%
Total	270	

Using I-statement analysis

Combining quantitative and qualitative analyses of I-statements may constitute a meaningful way of exploring changes and developments in learner thinking

Enables 'vertical' (how I-statements change over time through a student's learning process) as well as 'horizontal' (I-statement patterns across whole learner group) analyses

A systematic yet sensitive tool for analysing first person narratives (reflective writing, self-evaluations, journals, biographies) – going beyond 'anecdotalism'

(Brown et al. 2007)

I-statement category	Frequency	Frequency %
actions & events: what I did or did not do, what happened during the module (e.g., <i>I started, I designed, I asked, I had the opportunity</i>)	168	28%
feelings & states: how I feel or felt, how I see myself now and during the module (e.g., <i>I was glad, I'm surprised, I felt nervous, I am friendly, I have many concerns</i>)	73	12%
insights & gains: what I've learned, discovered, gained during the module (e.g., <i>I realized, I became aware, I have learned, I found, I benefit, I can, I am able to, I know</i>)	160	27%
thoughts & beliefs: what I think, believe, speculate (e.g., <i>I think, I mean, I believe, I guess, I wonder</i>)	72	12%
constraints & pressures: what I cannot or could not do, what I should have done or have to do during the module (e.g., <i>I could not, I did not how, I had no idea, I should have, I have to</i>)	33	5%
future goals & challenges: what I want, should or need to do in the future, what the future holds for me (e.g., <i>I would like to, I plan to, I might, I will, I want to, I should</i>)	78	13%
personal history: experiences and events from the past (e.g., <i>when I look back at my own experience of learning English, when I was in China</i>)	18	3%
total	602	100%

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ADDITIONAL TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS: I-STATEMENTS

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[E.g. Brown et al. 2007; Fang & Warschauer 2004; Ushioda 2008, 2010; Wei 2011]

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Trying out I-statement analysis of learner reflections

Here are I-statements from a piece of reflective writing. This reflective writing is by a student enrolled in an MA module for novice teachers in TESOL in which participants engage in some peer-teaching and action research. Study the I-statements and discuss how you might categorize them:

- 1 after I finished the peer-teaching and conducted the tasks
- 2 I did not know how to explain the complicated process to my students.
- 3 I had the chance to know what was going on in the real classroom situations by doing interviews.
- 4 Reflecting on myself, as a teacher, I was glad to see that many said in the feedback that I was a gentle teacher and created a good classroom atmosphere.
- 5 I realized that it is a hard work to become a professional teacher.
- 6 Through the experience of peer teaching, I have learnt two important things. They are the importance of the teaching plan and class management.
- 7 I need to learn how to remain calm when feeling very nervous
- 8 Through these series of experiences, I become aware of the fact that every teacher has her own belief and her own teaching method.
- 9 But I learnt more, observed the classes, interviewed a number of experienced teachers.
- 10 I learnt that a good lesson plan should be flexible
- 11 Moreover, I have learnt that the lesson planning process is an unfinished or never ending process.
- 12 I can see the fact that I have learnt a little about research methods through the experience.
- 13 it suggests that I gained my own view on them (module tasks)
- 14 I realized that the teaching ways differ according to the teacher
- 15 I came to a conclusion that creating a trusting relationship between the teachers and the students should be very important.
- 16 I will improve these deficiencies which were stated above during the lesson plan and the real lesson phase in my future teaching.
- 17 I realize how interesting the classroom could be once we step back and become an observer
- 18 I found some points to improve and made great improvement observing my first lesson plan
- 19 In the future, in order to develop and polish my skills, I will focus on the practical part.
- 20 I can see that the theories gave me insights into learning.
- 21 I think it is a good tool for teachers (lesson plan)
- 22 I realized that writing the aims and tasks helps teacher organize the lesson clearly.
- 23 I became aware of the fact that, even though the teaching theories make a great improvement in teaching, it makes no sense if the teacher did not follow the basic teaching techniques.
- 24 I had many occasions to attend other teachers' lessons, both as a student and as an observer.
- 25 From this experience, I have learnt the importance of making things simple in teaching.
- 26 However, I felt less confident during the lesson.
- 27 I think it is my strong point (being a gentle teacher) and should take advantage of my strength.
- 28 now I can answer most of the questions by myself too.