



# RESEARCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RESEARCH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

## Spring 2011 Issue 25

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## Message from the coordinators

Dear RESEARCH SIG members,

After the recent IATEFL conference in Brighton I have a few words to say. The most important news is that I have stepped down as SIG Coordinator and that Richard Smith (University of Warwick) is filling the post, as of the RESIG Forum at the conference. I am very glad that Richard is taking over as he seems an ideal person, not only in terms of his background inside and outside IATEFL, but also because he has some new ideas for the SIG. We have been lucky to be able to discuss the future of RESEARCH SIG together before and after the Forum, and I will continue very happily on the SIG committee, to help Richard in any way I can.

As is customary I want to say some thank-yous, but not just because it is customary, but because there are a number of colleagues who have been a real support not just to me, but more importantly, to the SIG. First, there is Shaida, our editor. Many of us did not really know Shaida, me included. However, I realise that she has been doing a hugely necessary job as editor and committee member, very much without most of us realising it. As far as I am concerned, Shaida has not only contributed enormously to RESEARCH SIG, but personally has been an enormous support in a somewhat difficult position as coordinator, as coordinators basically depend on members to achieve anything. Shaida has helped set up a number of things for the future, particularly the discussion group, at RESIG in Yahoo Groups, where she has also begun an index of members and their research profiles, as requested by some members. We hope to develop the RESIG Yahoo Group activity, with membership support, of course. Thank you very, very much to Shaida. Other members, who are not only loyal to RESIG, but whose support I really appreciate, are Sarah Mercer and Ana Falcao. Thanks to you both.

Also a big thank you to Eleanor Broadbridge. To all SIG coordinators, Eleanor is an essential part of IATEFL, and not only a huge support, but also a very efficient colleague. Thank you very much to Eleanor for her help and, in many cases, for making up for my deficiencies. Thank you also to many others at IATEFL head office, not least Glenda Smart and Alison Medland.

Last, but not least, a big thank you to Colin Mackenzie, the overall SIG coordinator, for being such an excellent manager of the overall SIG committee, but also a very capable manager of us as people .... Not always easy. The meetings have always been not only well organised, not only efficiently run, but also conducted with great respect, and nimble sensitivity. I will miss the bonhomie of the SIG meetings, with so much voluntary commitment and responsibility to IATEFL, not to mention the genuine concern, but the humour as well.

Thanks to you all, and to Herbert, and Amos, and, and ...

Looking to the future, I wish Richard all the best, and hope that all you RESIG members will help him and us to take RESIG forward. The legacy of RESEARCH SIG, inherited most recently from both Simon Borg and Alan Fortune, is the RESEARCH newsletter, organising the PCE this year, re-activating and broadening the RESIG Yahoo group, and encouraging RESIG participation in the conference in Poland with Mirek Pawlak (see the back page for details). I would like to add a special thank you to Professor Simon Borg for a truly excellent PCE that he conducted single-handed on Doing Quality Research – he showed what quality research is and what quality PCEs are. We are all lucky at IATEFL that eminent professionals and colleagues in the field offer their expertise voluntarily to the rest of us. Thanks also to the contributors to the RESIG programme at the conferences. On that note, take care, all the best, and don't hesitate to help the SIG!

Anthony Bruton

Dear Anthony and all RESIG members

Anthony, your suggestion that I take over as coordinator came rather 'out of the blue' (at the end of a panel discussion in the RESIG track at the Brighton conference that I moderated on 'Investigating large classes'). I'd been in touch with you previously with an idea for getting summaries of some of the best MA in ELT/TESOL dissertations each year into the newsletter, and that's one idea I'd certainly like to try to take forward. I'd also like to see if the SIG can reach out a bit more not only to English teachers in general but to teachers in so-called 'difficult circumstances', and I have a strong interest in seeing whether we can help promote both practitioner research and the mediation of relevant research findings to practitioners. At the same time, I'm very aware that the SIG depends on the loyalty and commitment of its existing members and I'd like to spend a few months learning what priorities you, the SIG's members, might see as major.

RESIG has a great committee going forward and – aside from those Anthony has mentioned – I'm very happy that Sarah Brewer (University of Reading) and Graham Hall (Northumbria University) have agreed to come on board – and there is space for more, so just get in touch if you'd like to be actively involved. We'd be very happy to hear from you also if you feel you'd like organize a SIG event in your institution, contribute to the newsletter, or help in some other way.

My final words here, though, are for Anthony – on behalf of all the members, thank you very much indeed for steering RESIG into its current strong position!  
[Richard Smith \(R.C.Smith@warwick.ac.uk\)](mailto:R.C.Smith@warwick.ac.uk)

## From the editor

Dear RESIG members,

Time flies and when you get this issue of ReSIG News it will be spring 2011. Although we were aiming to send you this issue before the annual conference, this was not possible. I hope that with your support we will be able to publish the newsletter more regularly.

## About this issue of Research News

The first of the contributions in this issue deals with teaching grammar in the ESL classroom. Ann Burns reports on part of a project that aimed to elicit teachers' personal perspectives on their practices in the classroom.

Anthony Bruton, Miguel García and Raquel Esquiliche examine the term 'incidental vocabulary learning' and its use for pedagogical L2 research purposes.

Marian Rossiter's article is focused on second language fluency. This is a report of the last phase of a project which was designed to determine the effectiveness of fluency instruction to ESL adults.

In Maureen Rajuan's article the focus switches to research processes and involving student teachers in research projects. She reports on a project that involved student teachers in promoting intercultural understanding between Arab and Jewish children through teaching and using English as a neutral language.

Sarah Mercer and Eveline Schwarz also focus on research and report on a language teachers' guided research group at the University of Graz. They describe the collaboration of teachers and researchers over one academic year to carry out research and the impact of their collaboration on teachers and their work.

Lindsay Ellwood reports on her workshop in IATEFL which looked at text interpretation and how cultural background can influence inferences drawn from reading a short story.

I hope you enjoy reading articles in this issue of the newsletter. I would like to thank the contributors who submitted their work for this issue. Please continue to support YOUR publication by sending us your ideas and works.

Submissions for the Research SIG newsletter should be sent to [ResearchSig@iatefl.org](mailto:ResearchSig@iatefl.org) and copied to me at [Shaida.mohammadi@gmail.com](mailto:Shaida.mohammadi@gmail.com). Please visit <http://resig.iatefl.org/submit.htm> for Research New and Author guidelines.

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# Teaching grammar in adult ELT classrooms: Teaching cognition and beliefs

Anne Burns

## Introduction

Grammar acquisition and the role of grammar in teaching has been a focus of much second language research over the last two decades. While different emphases have been given to the teaching of grammar at different times in the ELT field, it is now generally accepted from the research that some formal focus on grammar is beneficial for language learning. One current view is reflected in Mitchell (2007: 27), that “grammar teaching needs to be supported and embedded in meaning-focused activities and tasks that give immediate opportunities for practice”.

In the project reported in this short article, the notion of embeddedness, or rather integration, was a key construct in investigating the views of teachers internationally regarding their practices in teaching grammar to adult learners. The specific research questions motivating the study were:

- To what extent do teachers say that they integrate grammar teaching into their work?
- What conceptions of integration emerge from teachers’ accounts of the relationship between the teaching of grammar and of language skills in their work?
- To what extent do teachers believe that their reported approach to the integration of grammar is effective in promoting language learning?
- What evidence do teachers cite in supporting their belief that their approach to integration is effective?

The study was located within the field of research known as teacher cognition which is “concerned with understanding what teachers, think, know and believe.

Its primary concern, therefore, lies with the unobservable dimension of teaching – teachers’ mental lives” (Borg, 2009: 163). Teacher cognition research in ELT is a field of research that has been establishing itself only over the last 20 years, with research having been conducted among pre-service and in-service teachers on a variety of areas, including the impact of previous language learning on practice, the relationships between cognitions and practice, beliefs about the teaching of grammar, writing and reading and the impact of formal training on practice (see Borg, 2006 for an extensive overview of major bodies of teacher cognition research). The key insights that have emerged from these studies show that:

- stated cognitions/beliefs do not always match behaviours
- incompatible relationships between cognitions and practice do not necessarily reflect flawed practice
- where cognitions are incompatible there may be other social, institutional, or instructional factors exerting more powerful influences
- context is fundamental to the shaping of beliefs and practices

There is now substantial evidence that teachers base instruction on their own practical theories which emerge from their teaching experience and are shaped by their perceptions of the teaching context. Teacher decision-making is complex and dynamic and depends on a range of interacting factors both within and beyond the classroom, that influence what teachers think and do. As studies have shown (e.g. Bailey, 1996; Burns, 1996), there is much to be gained from research that seeks to understand how teachers’ practical actions are motivated by ways of thinking about various aspects of language teaching and learning, in the case of this study the teaching of grammar. Such research can inform comparisons of the relationships between formal theory (e.g. as in the SLA literature) and practical theory (e.g. as in teachers’ conceptualisations of grammar integration).

## Method

The study reported here is part of a larger project that took an interpretive-exploratory approach, using a questionnaire, observations and interviews, where the aim was to elicit teachers’ personal perspectives on their practices in the classroom.

The questionnaire was first piloted with a group of teachers in Brazil and Australia and then distributed

electronically, using SurveyMonkey, and in paper-based form to allow for situations where technology might be limited, through the researchers' personal professional contacts. Using a questionnaire enabled us to gather a large amount of data efficiently and in a standardised way (Dörnyei, 2003) and from widely diverse geographical regions. The findings reported below are based on responses from 176 teachers from 18 countries across the world. Not all questions were responded to by all participants, however; the findings reported below are based on those completed. Also, as the data collected consisted of reports on beliefs, thinking and attitudes towards the teaching of grammar, it cannot claim to reflect what teachers actually do, but only what they say they do.

The first section of the questionnaire gathered demographic information about the participants (teaching experience, qualifications, type of teaching institution etc); section 2 presented 15 statements about teaching grammar (e.g. the role of explicit teaching, the importance of practice etc.) on a five-point Likert scale, strongly agree to strongly disagree. The last section, which included open-ended questions to elicit teachers' views, asked specifically about the integration of grammar with the teaching of other skills.

## Findings

In this article, I report only on some of the key findings from the third section of the questionnaire in order to draw out salient insights about teachers' views of integration. The major focus for the research was to determine to what extent the notion of integration was prevalent among teachers in different parts of the world. Thus, participants were asked to respond to the statement:

*Grammar should be taught separately, not integrated with other skills such as reading and writing.*

Among the participants there appears to be strong support for the notion of integration as 84.1% of teachers disagreed or disagreed strongly with this statement.

We were also interested in the extent of integration as the participants perceived it to be part of their teaching. The key question here was:

*In your teaching to what extent is grammar integrated with the teaching of other skills?*

As the figure above shows, by far the majority of respondents to this question (n= 162) indicated that complete or substantial integration of grammar was common in their practice (66%). Approximately 32%

indicated a tendency towards some integration, while only 2% (or 2 teachers) replied that there was no integration of grammar teaching into tasks and activities, suggesting that for these teachers, grammar was a question of separate instruction.

Following from this indication of the extent of integration, a further question was aimed at finding out about how teachers' went about integrating grammar and skills teaching. Our analysis of a large number of qualitative responses to this question led us to identify two broad groups of responses which provide complementary perspectives on integration. One perspective suggests that teachers make decisions about integration based on textual and communicative purposes. Teachers indicated that they derive grammar from the texts they are using or select texts to illustrate certain grammatical points. Alternatively, they focus on the grammar needed to complete tasks presented in class.

A second perspective relates to the timing perceived to be necessary for integrating grammar and skills. This is a temporal approach where teachers decide to introduce grammar to prepare for skills work, to follow up after skills work or to react to errors or questions that arise during skills work. These two broad approaches are summarised in Table 1.

Contextual Orientations
Derive grammar from texts
Choose texts to illustrate grammar
Focus on grammar required for tasks
Temporal Orientations
Grammar to prepare for skills work
Grammar to follow up skills work
Grammar during skills work

**Table 1: Conceptualizations of 'integration' in teachers' descriptions of their practices**

A further question asked teachers to provide their personal assessment of the effectiveness of their approach to integration. The responses to this question are set out in Table 2.

	N	%
Separate and effective	9	5.6
Separate but not effective	5	3.1
Integrate and effective	146	90.1
Integrate and not effective	2	1.2
Total	162	100

**Table 2: Assessment of effectiveness of approach**

As this table shows, of 162 teachers who responded to the question, 146 or 90.1% indicated that they believed their practices relating to grammar integration were effective. We also asked them to indicate what evidence they would cite to support their claims of effective integration.

*How do you know that your approach to separating or integrating grammar is or is not effective in helping your adult learners improve their English?*

They indicated a variety of factors which broke down into the following categories:

### **Communicative ability**

This evidence was commonly cited through comments, such as:

“in general I can gauge it by the ease in which they communicate clearly and effectively.” (Australia)

Other more specific comments related to using grammar correctly, using it appropriately in context, and using it to achieve tasks successfully.

### **Progress**

Teachers also cited their students' progress as evidence of effectiveness, as in this comment from Malaysia:

“I see the students at the beginning of the term and at the end, and I see they communicate more correctly and more confidently.” (Malaysia)

### **Student affect**

Another factor related to observation of students' positive responses and feelings about learning English. Teachers reported seeing greater confidence, more participation and interest and, as this teacher from Turkey noted, student satisfaction:

“I think the closest thing I have to a reliable measure is student satisfaction. My students...are more satisfied when grammar is related to its use. Whether this means this approach is effective in improving my learners' English is anyone's guess! “(Turkey)

### **Student feedback**

Apart from their own observations of students' reactions and behaviours, teachers also referred to students' oral and written feedback, as this teacher commented:

“Student feedback; They tell me what they feel works or doesn't work and what they feel is most beneficial in improving their English.”(Australia)

### **Other sources of evidence**

Teachers also cited other sources including their students' performance on assessment, for example, “they all passed their final examination” (Italy), their own experience of teaching, their negative experiences of teaching grammar in isolation, their own experiences as learners, and their “intuition” as teachers.

One interesting aspect of the responses to this part of the questionnaire was that there was no evidence of references to formal or theoretical knowledge that teachers might have gained through professional development or training.

### **Some overall conclusions**

The responses illustrated in this short article are drawn from a non-probability sample of teachers' responses. Therefore, the findings are limited to this particular group of teachers from different locations across the world. It is not possible to generalize the findings or to suggest that they could also apply to teachers of teenagers or young children. However, they still provide some interesting insights and on the basis of these it is possible to draw the following conclusions. First, among the teachers surveyed there is a strong belief in the need to avoid teaching grammar in isolation of skills work and in the

effectiveness of integration in promoting language learning with adults. Also, the teachers' conceptions of integration focus on contextual and temporal relationships between grammar and skills work. A further interesting finding is that the sources of evidence cited by teachers for effectiveness of integration is overwhelmingly experiential and practical and there is a noticeable absence of technical language and explicit reference to formal theory. This raises interesting directions for further research where research from both the SLA and teacher cognition perspectives might be usefully combined to gain insights into how teachers make sense of their work.

## Notes

1. My co-researcher in this project was Dr Simon Borg, University of Leeds. The research was funded by a TESOL International Research Foundation (TIRF) Priority Grant, 2005-6.
2. A full discussion of the questionnaire phase of the project can be found in Borg and Burns (2008).
3. A version of this article was presented for the Research SIG at the IATEFL Conference, Harrogate, 2010.

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# THE TERM 'INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY LEARNING' IS NOT USEFUL FOR PEDAGOGICAL L2 RESEARCH PURPOSES

Anthony Bruton, Miguel García & Raquel Esquiliche

## Introduction

Most references to incidental language learning not only refer to vocabulary learning (Hulstijn, 2003), but to vocabulary learning through reading. The assumption is that much of the vocabulary that adults have acquired in their L1 could not have been acquired (consciously) under instruction, so it must have developed naturally first through oral discourse, and subsequently through reading. This is referred to as the default hypothesis (see Hulstijn, 2001, for example), since the argument is that if the vocabulary development cannot be attributed to classroom instruction, it must typically happen elsewhere, essentially from reading. However, in discussions of L2 vocabulary development there are actually references to two senses of incidental. L2 vocabulary is learnt (1) as a *by-product* of some other activity, usually reading for comprehension (e.g. Brown, Waring, & Donkaewbua, 2008; Gass, 1999; Huckin & Coady, 1999; Laufer & Hill, 2000; Mondria, 2003; Paribakht & Wesche, 1999; Schmidt, 1994); and/or (2) when there is *no* (conscious) *intention* to learn it (e.g. Brown et al., 2008; Hulstijn, 1990; Hulstijn, Hollander & Greidanus, 1996; Paribakht & Wesche, 1999; Schmidt, 1994). However, these terms are actually not at all synonymous.

The first sense of the word supposes that the learning of L2 vocabulary is incidental to some other activity, reading for example. In research terms, typically, groups who have read certain texts are compared with other groups who either have not read any texts or have read alternative texts, and both groups are tested on certain target items, which might have been pretested or be substitute (nonsense) words. All particular results would show is whether any new vocabulary has been learnt from reading, or not. However, the target activity does not determine what a particular reader does, and even less what all the readers might do. For example, in the Cho and Krashen (1994) study, there was one participant who did not look up any words, underline them, or list them, and two that did, while in the Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt (2010) study, one of the participants who had not been forewarned of the posttest thought she would be tested and went back to review certain words she had underlined, in contrast to others who did not. Furthermore, if there is little control over what participants do out of class, incidental might only mean 'non-instructed'.

The second sense of incidental is in contrast to intentional learning or as Hulstijn (1990) observes: "the notion of incidental learning cannot be described in positive terms: it can only be described as the absence of its antonym i.e. the absence of an intention to commit something to memory and not to forget it" (p.33). In this sense, the only way of identifying incidental learning would be by assessing all the vocabulary learning and subtracting any intentional vocabulary learning outcomes, with incidental being the residue. However, identifying intentional vocabulary learning would only really be possible through some form of introspection. This would be complicated in real time, especially if there is virtually simultaneous attention to comprehension and learning, and very unreliable retrospectively, especially across subjects and items. Relating these attended items to identifiable learning outcomes is an additional hurdle. Furthermore, in the retrospective scenario would it be possible to recall in an ongoing way any, let alone all, intentional learning that occurred when most of the attention was on the processing of the message? Even if it were, the amount of intention would be a matter of degree and it would be impossible to quantify all the items which all the participants had the intention to learn while reading. At best there would be anecdotal retrospective evidence of intention as in the cases cited, which would also need to be correlated to learning outcomes. This is not very viable and, even if it were, it would be unreliable. If the intentional side of the vocabulary learning is so problematic, what of the residual incidental?



Hulstijn (2001) pragmatically makes the operational contrast between being told of a test or not: "In operational terms, incidental and intentional learning can simply be distinguished in terms of the use of prelearning instructions that either do, or do not, forewarn subjects about the existence of a subsequent retention test" (p. 268). The assumption is that by being told of an upcoming test, readers will intentionally try to commit (some) new items to memory. Hulstijn goes on to apply the same distinction to the reading comprehension:

Also, in the example at the beginning of this section, learners serve under an intentional condition as far as they read the text in order to prepare for answering the up-coming comprehension question, but they simultaneously serve under an incidental condition in that they are being exposed to unfamiliar words (with or without glosses) without being expected to be tested on their retention of these words. (p.268)

However, research by Peters (2006) and Peters, Hulstijn, Serco and Lutjeharms (2009) show that actually even participants put in the intentional condition of being told of the vocabulary test before reading did not outperform those who did not – the relevance of certain items to the comprehension was much more significant. It would seem that despite being told of the test the participants in this condition were more intent on comprehending the texts. This is not altogether surprising since the participants in the intentional condition are put in a contradictory or unnatural situation of supposedly concentrating on certain vocabulary items for the test, while trying to understand the text. Furthermore, the incidental condition assumes that the task is reading during which there might be some attention to new vocabulary in an on-and-off sense, while in the intention condition there is expected to be an intention to learn all the way through the reading.

The conclusion is that in research terms, incidental vocabulary learning from reading is a somewhat ambiguous term that is probably not very useful. In research in the by-product sense of the term., all it means is that certain vocabulary items might or might not be learnt when participants' main task goal is reading for comprehension. However, during the task there is no telling what different participants might actually be doing, especially in terms of intentions to learn. Over a period of time, of course, there is no control over additional exposure and learning, especially in second language acquisition contexts. The other sense of incidental, as a residue of intentional learning, is dependent on all the intentions to learn vocabulary being identifiable during the reading and then the actual learning outcomes, from which to deduce the incidental learning - an

unmanageable task, especially across subjects, lexical items and reading contexts and circumstances. In other words, both senses of the term incidental vocabulary learning may make some sense experientially and theoretically, but the term is not very useful for any applicable research purposes.

In a nutshell, incidental vocabulary learning as a by-product of reading does not necessarily implicate incidental as not intentional, and certainly not in all cases, all of the time. Furthermore, what is incidental as the residue of intentional learning depends on what is intentional learning, which is only identifiable for some of the items in some circumstances, varying very much from reader to reader, and thus item to item. Therefore, if incidental in the second sense is somewhat ephemeral, even more so in the first, and the first sense does not necessarily implicate the second.

### Acknowledgement

The clarifications of these concepts became apparent during the project SEJ2006-06321 funded by the Spanish government.

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# IATEFL Conference Research Report: Teaching Second Language Fluency

Marian Rossiter

## Introduction

**One of the factors that affect people's willingness to communicate with second language users of English in social, academic, and employment contexts is their perceived fluency or ease of expression. My recent research has focused on defining, assessing, and teaching second language fluency. The last phase of the project was designed to determine the effectiveness of fluency instruction to ESL adults. Partial analyses were presented at the IATEFL 2010 conference in response to the research question: Do 16 hours of speaking fluency instruction to L2 learners result in significant improvements in temporal fluency ratings of learners' oral productions?**

## Procedures

### Participants

The learners were registered in full-time, intact ESL classes in a post-secondary Canadian college and assessed at Canadian Language Benchmark 4 (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2000). The control group consisted of 16 students with 8 first languages other than English. They ranged in age from 20-51 years ( $M=35$  years) and had been in Canada from 3 to 29 months ( $M=7.1$  months). The treatment group consisted of 16 learners from 9 different language backgrounds. They ranged in age from 18 to 45 years ( $M=35$  years), and had been in Canada for a period of 2 to 48 months ( $M=12.7$  months). The ESL instructor was a female native speaker of English with a Bachelor of Education degree, 19 years of adult ESL teaching experience, and a special interest in speaking and pronunciation. The 20 native speakers of English who participated in a listening experiment were registered in post-graduate TESL courses.

## Instruction

In this quasi-experimental study, specially-designed speaking fluency instruction was provided to a treatment group of adult ESL learners, and no special fluency instruction to the control group. Both classes received a total of 300 hours of instruction and were taught by the same instructor in different terms; the treatment group participated in 16 hours of fluency activities that were integrated into the regular curriculum content daily over 5 weeks: consciousness-raising, conversation analysis, chat circles, timed productions, repetition, shadowing, use of lexical chunks and fillers, and self-monitoring..

## Listening experiment

A series of narrative and monologue tasks was administered to each group at pre-instruction, immediate-post instruction, and follow-up data collection points (Weeks 1, 6, 13). Twenty-second excerpts from Weeks 1 and 13 were selected from near the beginning of each learner production (minus initial dysfluencies). The stimuli were paired and randomized across time and speaker for each task in 4 versions, then recorded onto CDs. After two practice items, 20 listeners provided fluency ratings of each of the paired stimuli using a 9-point scale (1=*extremely dysfluent*, 9=*extremely fluent*).

## Results

We used repeated measures ANOVA to determine within- and between-group differences in fluency ratings over time in the narratives and in the monologues of the control and treatment groups. We found a significant improvement in fluency ratings over time on both tasks, for both groups ( $F[1, 30] = 14.71, p = .001$ ); significantly higher fluency ratings for the monologue compared with the narrative ( $F[1, 30] = 13.66, p = .001$ ); but no significant between-group differences ( $F[1, 30] = .290, p = .594$ ).

Research with intact adult ESL classes in our community is difficult, as learners vary in age, educational background, first language, length of residence, and other important factors. In the study described here, we provided sufficient flexibility in the instruction to enable the teacher to adapt fluency activities to the needs and interests of the ESL learners in the treatment group. Although the treatment group's temporal fluency ratings improved over time, they were not significantly superior to those of the control group. Further analyses are currently being conducted to determine group differences in fluency at Week 6 which might not have been sustained at Week 13, as well as the effect of

reported exposure to English outside the classroom (verbal interaction, radio, television, etc.). These analyses may support findings from earlier fluency studies in ESL contexts which suggest that instructional effects, although present immediately following treatment, may not be sustained over time, and/or that interaction in English outside the classroom exerts a strong influence on the development of speaking fluency. Further investigation may also identify other aspects of fluency development (e.g., formulaic sequences) that distinguish the productions of the control and treatment groups.

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# Reflections of a teacher educator on student teacher research: Jewish and Arab children communicate across linguistic borders

Maureen Rajuan

## Introduction

The role of the teacher educator in the twenty-first century is increasingly becoming one comprised of a multitude of requirements and demands (Ben-Peretz, 2001). As teacher educators, we ask ourselves many different questions: How can we promote reflection on teaching practice among our student teachers? How can we integrate theory with practice in our training programs? How can we design curriculum that render EFL more relevant to pupils' lives? How can we integrate values into the English language teaching agenda?

One of the answers to these questions has been the final research project that is required of student teacher candidates in our teacher education program. Through this project, student teachers learn to design and implement research methods as an integral part of their lesson planning and ongoing teaching practice, for the purpose of gaining hands-on knowledge of ways to incorporate research elements into their teaching as an important tool for their future careers. Whereas the results of this research study have been reported elsewhere (Rajuan & Michael, 2009), as well as in the Proceedings of the Harrogate Conference 2010, the purpose of this article is to reflect upon the importance of research for teacher training from my own perspective as a teacher educator. The conclusions from this case study of one student teacher research project are multi-leveled regarding pupils, student teachers and teacher educators.

In fulfillment of the final project requirement, this research project was carried out by Jewish student teachers in an elementary Bedouin school, under the supervision of their teacher trainer in the framework of the English Department of an Israeli teacher training college. The purpose of the project was: 1) to promote intercultural understanding between Arab and Jewish children 2) to change attitudes and stereotypes 3) to teach and use English as a neutral language to bridge cultural differences and 4) to involve student teachers in the research process.

## Background to the Study

The Israeli educational system is divided into two main sectors, the Jewish sector and the Arab sector, in which the medium of instruction is according to the native language, Hebrew in the Jewish schools and Arabic in the Arab and Bedouin schools. Both Jewish and Arab children are required to learn English according to the same curriculum of the Ministry of Education.

The emphasis on English as a neutral language common to both Bedouin and Jewish children, as well as the medium of instruction for the educational intervention by the Jewish student teachers, served to neutralize the issue of language as a cultural barrier (Abu Raas, 2000; Doye, 1999). English became the medium of communication between the Bedouin children and their Jewish student teachers, as well as a potential means of communication with Jewish children.

The psychological theory underlying the educational intervention of this project was based on the principles of Raviv, Oppenheimer and Bar-Tal (1999):

1. Developmental factors form the basis for concept formation and it is, therefore, important that the concepts presented to young children be on a concrete level. Friendship, as the main theme of the educational intervention, was chosen as an age-appropriate concept for young learners.
2. External sources of information serve to enrich and change existing information and stereotypes. The educational intervention was based on presentation of materials designed to compare and contrast the Arab and Jewish cultures. Some examples include holidays, religious artifacts, traditional clothes, foods and customs, folk tales and legends, representing both cultures.

## Method

### Procedure

Two Jewish student teachers designed a 'friendship unit' that was co-taught one lesson weekly in English only in two Bedouin sixth-grade classes. The research tools were administered in Arabic by the Bedouin English subject cooperating teacher and the children's responses were translated into English by her.

### Research tools

Two research tools, designed by the student teachers, were administered before and after the educational intervention:

1. A questionnaire relating to attitudes towards knowing about and being friends with Jewish people.

2. An open-ended free-association task asking the pupils to complete the sentences 'Arabs are .....

## Results

Stereotypes were shown to decrease to a significant degree on the free-association task. Cultural differences were frequent in the pre-test. Categories that were elicited from the data showed stereotypes, such as 'different religion,' 'different language,' animals ('dog,' 'donkey,' and 'pig'), 'immodest clothing' and others. These cultural differences decreased significantly and were replaced by neutral and positive statements in the post-test. Examples of these included 'friends,' 'want to meet people,' and 'want peace.'

	Before	After
1. Questionnaire	Bedouin children know very little about Jewish people and have met very few Jewish people, but are highly motivated to know more and meet more.	Bedouin children report that they know a lot more about Jewish people and feel that they know more Jewish people.
2. Free-association task	Stereotypes: negative – 57.0% neutral – 20.7% positive – 22.3%	Stereotypes: negative – 25.5% neutral – 17.5% positive – 57.0%

**Table 1. Research findings**

## Discussion

### Conclusions concerning pupils

The research findings point to three major conclusions concerning the pupils. The first being that stereotypes are variable and given to change, according to the newer social view, through educational interventions of a limited and focused nature. We have found that one effective strategy for the changing of stereotypes among young children is the strengthening of their own self-image. Another is the comparison of characteristics of one's ethnic group with other "out groups" of differing characteristics.

The second conclusion is that age-specific interventions are effective at the early stage of concrete concept formation. Children can relate to the concept of friendship in the context of their own lives when confronted by information and encounters with other ethnic groups.

The third conclusion is that language-learning of English as a neutral language can bridge barriers of cultural, religious and ethnic connotations of the native language. English, when taught as a language of communication, is perceived by children as a tool for connecting to the similarities they share with other children.

### Conclusion concerning student teachers

Conclusions concerning the student teachers are based on the research methods and findings reported above. The concept of bias emerged spontaneously when the student teachers realized that the pupils would not readily share their negative stereotypes with their Jewish student teachers, since they were perceived as representatives of the target group. This difficulty led to collaboration with the cooperating teacher who suggested that she administer the research tools. From this, the student teachers learned about the research concept of "bias" and that it can be partially overcome through methods of planned design.

Another research issue that emerged was the awareness that the use of English (L3) by young pupils as a mode of response to the questionnaires would greatly limit their ability to answer honestly and fully. Again, the local English teacher was asked to administer the research tools in the pupils' native language and to translate their answers to the questionnaires from Arabic to English.

Student teachers learned that research tools can be easily designed and implemented in the classroom setting as part of their ongoing teaching when research questions emerge from issues that are genuinely important to the student teachers themselves, as opposed to those that are imposed from without to satisfy some academic requirement. Whereas student teachers are trained to use traditional methods of assessment to evaluate achievement in English language learning, changes in pupils' values and attitudes are largely overlooked. In this study, student teachers were able to investigate and reflect upon their impact on pupils regarding significant changes in stereotypes and attitudes toward the "other." The positive results attained in this study regarding issues that go beyond the classroom contributed to the student teachers' feeling of empowerment as future teachers and as agents of change.

The student teachers in this project were able to use theoretical background to advantage by translating principles of multicultural education and child development psychology into subject matter content appropriate to both the pupil population and to their research goals.

The generation of new research questions among student teachers is an important goal of the project. In this study, the question of the impact of the personal relationship formed between the student teachers and the pupils as a factor that impacted the results was raised. The students made the claim that the results were attained largely as a result of teaching of the culture unit and the new information that pupils gained from it. This information often added to and, in some cases, challenged pupils' existing knowledge about the "other." However, a limitation of the study was that the student teachers' personal interaction with the pupils could not be neutralized as a contributory factor to the results. This appears to be an ongoing issue in participant research and one that teachers should be aware of when analyzing their own data.

### Conclusions concerning teacher educators

We believe that when undergoing the research process, student teachers are simultaneously undergoing the same learning process that they advocate. They are learning to come up with new teaching methods and materials, to apply them with different children, and to analyze and reach conclusions from the results, which all contribute to the effort to train future teachers in independent thinking.

The conclusions concerning the student teachers reported above are based on reflections and observations of the results of the students' research project. In the future, the design of research tools, such as questionnaires and semi-formal interviews, to investigate the impact of the final research project directly upon the student teachers themselves will add to the research data concerning the benefits of the project to student teachers. Some questions in need of investigation concerning the implementation of the research project in the future include the form of guidance given to student teachers, the nature of the research design (quantitative versus different forms of qualitative research models) and the optimal balance between student teacher and teacher trainer collaboration. In addition, longitudinal follow-up studies could seek to determine the impact of research elements on the careers of student teachers as they move through the stages of novice and experienced teachers in interaction with different teaching situations in various school contexts.

The model of collaborative research presented here can be used to encourage teacher educators to enter into collaborative research with student teachers. In our program, each student is given a second advisor from among the teaching staff to guide and give feedback during the process of the research, as well as to give a final assessment grade. Involvement of a faculty member may be expanded to include the possible sharing of co-publication of the research report. In this way, not only would faculty members receive an incentive to become more active in aiding students, but they would also receive compensation in the form of needed publications, in times when monetary finding for research assistance to students is lacking. The model of collaborative research presented here is one way in which student teachers can be greatly empowered to find a voice to express their fresh and innovative ideas at the beginning of their careers and to gain awareness that they have much to contribute to the field of English language teaching.

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# Helping Each Other to Research: A Collaborative Guided Research Group

**Sarah Mercer & Eveline Schwarz**

**This short article will report upon a language teachers' guided research group which worked together at the University of Graz, Austria. The group consisted of 10 language teachers who met regularly throughout just over one academic year. Each teacher worked individually or with a partner on small research projects related to their teaching or fields of interest. The group comprised some experienced researchers and others with little or no experience of conducting research. The final product was a collection of edited papers; each one written by the teachers and published by the university press. The more impressive product was a growth in the participating language teachers' self-confidence to carry out research projects on their own, as well as increased motivation for all involved both in respect to their teaching and professional lives as a whole.**

## Introduction

In our tertiary-level language teaching context, language teachers are implicitly expected to carry out research but in practical terms there is very little, if any, real support offered in this respect. With teaching loads of on average minimum 14 – 16 hours per week plus the usual marking and administration, many find it difficult to know where to find the time or how to even begin.

In a study by Borg (2007), he asked experienced teachers for reasons why they did not carry out research, the teachers responded citing lack of time, knowledge and the fact it was something the 'academics' do and not the focus of their own work/teaching. They

also referred to the absence of any kind of research climate amongst their language teaching colleagues. Confronted with a similar situation in our own context, we set out to de-mystify the research process and make it accessible and feasible for practising language teachers in our university setting.

Following the rationale and traditions underpinning approaches such as action research (e.g., Burns, 1999; Crookes, 1993; Edge, 2001) and exploratory practice (Allwright, 2003), the group aimed at encouraging teachers to examine 'puzzles' or 'questions' that they had arising from their own teaching contexts. In this way, it was hoped that the insights gained would be grounded in reality and thus have immediate applied practical relevance. It is not the purpose of this article to enter into the debates surrounding the value of teacher-knowledge; however, the project was an expression of an underlying belief that, although practising teachers can benefit from theories generated solely within academia, bottom-up theories stemming from practical, real world teaching situations can also be of particular value in pedagogical terms and represent a form of knowledge which often seems to be somewhat undervalued and lacking in more widespread professional recognition.

Additionally, it was hoped that the guided research group could help to develop a "community of inquiry" (Wells & Chiang-Wells, 1992 cited in Burns, 2009: 294) within our context, in which teachers felt empowered and encouraged to engage in critical reflection and investigation of their teaching contexts and practices. As such, it was also intended to serve as a form of professional development for those who took part. As research is often perceived as being a rather solitary undertaking, it was also hoped that the group meetings could transform research into a shared experience, whilst still enabling individuals to follow their own particular focus of interest.

## Organisation

We met seven times over the course of approximately sixteen months. Each session lasted approximately two hours. Four of the sessions were guided with input from those with research experience and addressed issues such as what is research, how to formulate research questions, choosing tools for generating data and exploring approaches to data analysis. There was also an e-platform to share materials & ideas and offer a forum for discussions and a place to pose questions to the other group members between sessions. By the end of the year, most of the participants had written up a report of their findings and these were put together as an

edited collection of papers published by the in-house university press. Not everyone who took part in the working group chose to produce a written paper in the end, although most did share their findings or experiences with the rest of the group.

## Input Sessions

It is impossible to offer an overview here of all the input sessions but perhaps an outline of two key sessions can provide a flavour of the style and content of these sessions. Our first session addressed issues of what research is and to this end we explored slightly adapted versions of the scenarios presented in Borg (2007). This led to fervent debates but also an increased awareness of the potential range of understandings of what constitutes research. We then discussed to what extent individuals in the group could envisage themselves carrying out various types of research in their own areas of interest. We also discussed what topics were of interest to try to identify areas that we would like to investigate and considered how to move from broad themes to more focused answerable research questions. We then agreed to try to at least identify our own personal topic of interest, or maybe even formulate a RQ or hypothesis as appropriate, before we met for the second time five weeks later. In the meantime, the e-platform was established and some articles, websites and references were shared to help guide our reading and ease our way into identifying topics and focusing on issues involved in formulating research questions or hypotheses.

In another session, we considered aspects of methodological design – rather ambitious for a two-hour session; however, this session was merely intended to introduce key concepts and offer a general overview of some of the issues involved. Above all, we focused on how to devise a research approach that provides data suitable for answering one's specific RQs, addressing one's hypothesis or exploring one's general area of interest, but we emphasised the need to take an approach that is realistically within one's capabilities and which is do-able in practical terms. We talked about different methods for generating data and considered their various benefits and drawbacks, as well as the implications of these decisions for the analysis stage of the projects. It was an intense session which opened up a range of issues and topics for participants to contemplate further. Additional recommended reading and the discussion forum enabled people to continue learning about these issues in more depth and helped

them to begin to personalise the content in ways relevant to their own research.

As time progressed and everybody engaged in their own research undertakings, we ceased to have input sessions but rather met to discuss and share our ideas, problems and concerns about our individual projects. The emerging atmosphere of trust and support was extremely important in maintaining momentum and motivation to continue with our research. Not everybody could attend each session, and it was hoped that the online facilities could provide support for those unable to attend. It is also worth noting that some members of staff attended input and discussion sessions but did not yet wish to carry out any research of their own. For these individuals, the group provided an opportunity to gain an insight into theoretical and practical issues involved in investigating their teaching contexts, and it is hoped that this coming year they may wish to undertake projects of their own.

## Evaluation

At the end of the year, the organisers distributed a short feedback questionnaire composed of five open-ended questions. Overwhelmingly, the participants reported that the project had enhanced their motivation for both for their teaching and research. Teachers also claimed to have gained more “confidence” and “courage” to undertake research projects of their own. The aspects which were particularly found to have been beneficial were the opportunity to share ideas with colleagues in an informal atmosphere, the theoretical input sessions and the impulse to reflect on one's own teaching context and hear about others' practices and experiences. Participants also reported positively on the group atmosphere and the drive it provided to continue with their projects. The group unanimously decided to continue with the project in this coming year and several new members have expressed a desire to join based on the reported success of the project. Naturally, however, there were also some problems and issues which we have identified as needing further development for a future undertaking of this kind. Firstly, many of the participants requested more additional input sessions and there were practical problems with the running of the e-platform which sadly was not used to its full potential. In addition, participants also suggested that they would have liked the chance to explore and discuss each other's writing, as this was done primarily alone after the end of the academic year and was the only aspect which did not incorporate a collaborative element.

Thus, whilst the outcome of the project in terms of the collection of papers is a positive form of feedback about the success of the project and a way of sharing our work with a broader audience, the most positive outcome was the motivating and supportive group dynamics which contributed positively to the working climate in group sessions and beyond within the institute itself. Although it was not possible to magically generate any extra time to carry out the research, it has been possible for participating teachers to develop some of the knowledge and skills to carry out projects which addressed issues of real concern in the focus of their teaching contexts.

## Ideas for the Future

Given the success of this project, we would definitely like to continue, perhaps in the future also involving language teachers from other schooling and non-tertiary contexts in an attempt to provide a bridge between language teachers at the university and in other contexts. We will also try to accommodate all the points raised in the feedback, whilst mindful of ensuring that the group should not become an additional burden in teachers' busy lives but rather a fruitful, motivating extension of it.

On the whole, it has been a very positive experience in which all the participants have learnt considerably from each other and have profited from the general supportive atmosphere of the group. We think it is worth forming such a guided research group and hope that by sharing our experiences in this article, we can encourage others to try the same kind of project. We would be interested to hear about any similar types of groups which could help us to improve and extend our current project and make sure that it becomes a long-term, established undertaking within our institution.

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# Qualitative Research: An investigation into influences of cultural background on the inferences drawn when reading a short story

Lindsay Ellwood

## Introduction

The workshop entitled 'Text Interpretation: why is yours so different from mine?' that I led at IATEFL 2010, was based on a piece of qualitative research, 'An investigation into the influences of cultural background on the inferences drawn when reading a short story.' This research will be summarized in this article.

## Context

This investigation developed from an interest in the interpretation of stories and in how language learners infer when processing texts. When members of a writer's group (culturally diverse, and a mixture of L1 and L2 speakers) read a story and commented upon it, their interpretations were very variable, and I began to think about how the reader uses his/her cognitive skills in order to interpret a story. I also noticed the differences between learners' interpretations of texts in the language classroom. Learners use these same mental processes to predict the meaning of a written or spoken text.

Although this investigation does not focus on language learners, the findings could have significant implications for language teachers.

## Cultural background

What do we understand by the term 'culture', when we talk about a person's cultural background? Sociologists now view culture as complex rule-like structures that constitute resources that can be put to strategic use (Bourdieu 1990, Sewell 1992, Swidler 1986). This view makes studying culture a very complex issue (DiMaggio 1997), and any research into the views of culture is well beyond the confines of this investigation. The definition of culture used here is: 'the customs, ideas, values, etc of a particular civilization, society or social group' (Chambers 21st Century Dictionary), which is a widely held view.

## The story – The Shawl by Cynthia Ozick

'The Shawl' by Cynthia Ozick was selected as the story for the informants to read. It is set during the Holocaust in World War 2., and is a compact story with strong themes, and one that the informants probably had not read; these points were crucial to the investigation.

## Theories and concepts

### Automatic gap-filling and inferencing

Implicit assumptions chain together successive parts of texts by supplying 'missing links' between explicit propositions, which the reader either supplies automatically from what Fairclough (2001) calls Member's Resources (MR), or works out through a process of inferencing.

An example of the strategy of automatic gap-filling in 'The Shawl' is, "...smooth feathers of hair nearly as yellow as the Star sewn into Rosa's coat". Most readers immediately realise that the yellow star sewn into Rosa's coat is the symbol the Jews were made to wear during World War 2. Automatic gap-filling is culturally dependent, and in this case would be more likely for interpreters with knowledge of European or Jewish history. Readers will be able to establish a 'fit' between the text and the world, by using common-sense assumptions and expectations. These are part of what Fairclough (2001) calls MR. During the interviews conducted for this investigation, all six informants mention the Jewish situation and the concentration camps.

An example of inferencing from 'The Shawl' is, "Below the helmet a black body like a domino and a pair of

black boots hurled themselves in the direction of the electrified fence.” The interpreter needs to do more proactive inferencing than is the case with automatic gap filling, to ascertain who is being referred to at this point in the story, as there has been no overt mention of this character. In the interviews, four out of the six informants mentioned that a soldier was carrying the baby towards the fence. All the informants had previously ascertained that this part of the story was set in a camp, and were able to infer from this knowledge that soldiers or guards would be present. This then fits with the information about the helmet and the black boots, but there is no direct reference to soldiers in the text. What is particularly interesting about examples such as this is that it is the reader who is responsible for bringing all these assumptions into the process of interpretation, not the text.

There is no sharp dividing line between automatic gap-filling and inferencing; there is probably a scale from links that need no working out to links that need a lot of inferential work. However, links that are supplied automatically by one interpreter may need more inferential work by another (Fairclough 2001), and these differences were illustrated in the analysis section.

## Frames, scripts and schemata

Fairclough (2001), states that a schema is a representation of a particular type of activity, and that schemata are part of MR constituting interpretive procedures, and frames and scripts are closely related notions. They constitute a family of types of mental representation of aspects of the world. Fairclough’s definitions of these notions follow. A schema represents a particular type of activity in terms of predictable elements in a predictable sequence. Schemata represent modes of behaviour whereas frames represent topics, subject matter or a referent within an activity. Frames can represent types of person or animate beings (a teenager, a lawyer, a horse e.g.), or inanimate objects (e.g. an office, a computer) or abstract concepts (Communism, revenge e.g.). While frames represent the entities, which can be referred to by the schemata, scripts represent the subjects who are involved in these activities, and their relationships. They embody the ways in which specific classes of subjects behave in social activities. For example, people have scripts for a barrister, for a defendant, and for how these two interact with each other.

Textual elements act as cues for a particular frame, and the frame provides a place for each textualized

detail, so that the apparently diverse elements are given coherence in the process of interpretation according to the frame. The expectations and assumptions that are already in the interpreter provide the ‘missing links’ to give coherence to the text.

## Research questions and hypothesis

Readers build up stereotypical patterns against which they match diverse texts, and as Widdowson (2007) suggests, these patterns are cultural constructs, and they can become firmly entrenched in our consciousness. Once we identify a text as an example of a pattern, we reduce it to the bare bones of the familiar pattern for purposes of longer-term memory and recall (Fairclough 2001).

Fairclough (2001) states that schemata are part of MR constituting interpretive procedures, and that frames and scripts are closely related notions. They constitute a family of types of mental representation of aspects of the world, and share the property of mental representations in general of being ideologically and culturally variable.

Taking the notion that concepts of textual patterns and mental representations are cultural constructs, this investigation was set up to compare the interpretations of a reading text, made by a small group of native speakers with a small group of non-native speakers. Cultural diversity exists between the two groups, and indeed, within the groups themselves.

The premise for this investigation is that significant cultural differences may become apparent between the native speaker group and the non-native speaker group, in the processing of information gathered during the reading of the short story, ‘The Shawl’ by Cynthia Ozick.

## Methodology

### The informants

Two comparative groups were set up, comprising three non-native speakers and three native speakers, as the informants for the study. A homogenous group was chosen, in this case six teachers and trainers, in order to limit the variability of the data, since this is a small-scale investigation.

<b>Informant</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Language/Country of Birth</b>
Inf. 1	French/ France
Inf. 2	Dutch/ The Netherlands
Inf. 3	English/ N. Ireland
Inf. 4	Spanish/ Bolivia
Inf. 5	English/ England
Inf. 6	English/ Scotland

Figure 1: First language/country of birth of informants

## Interviews

In order to collect the data for this study, an interview was set up with each informant. The author was present as they read the story for the first time; they paused at designated points in the story to describe their interpretations of the text. These responses were recorded and the data was later analysed.

A 'think aloud' protocol was chosen as a method for conducting the interviews. Since this investigation depends upon the verbalisation of the informants' thoughts, this method was chosen as the best option to produce the required data. A structured interview, it was decided, would produce a very different set of data, as informants would explain their thoughts in this situation.

## Questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent to all the informants a short time after the interviews were completed. This comprised two parts; the first consisted of background questions about the informants. The second part consisted of two questions requiring detailed information about the informants' reactions to the story:

- Were there any sections of the story that you thought were open to alternative interpretations?

- Can you identify any points in the story where your personal experience influenced your interpretation of the story?

Informants were asked to give as many examples as possible, referring closely to the text in their answers.

## Emergent patterns

After analysing the data, several patterns emerged from the information gathered from the two groups of informants.

The first pattern is the experience of motherhood. All of the informants are mature women and mothers with grown-up children, so gender and age, as well as motherhood are influential factors in their interpretation of the story. Since the story is primarily about a mother's love for her child, these factors are a particularly important influence on the informants' interpretations.

The second pattern to emerge is that all the informants have lived as expatriates at some time and all have travelled quite extensively. Three of the informants have lived in developing or poor countries. These experiences may have given them an informed perspective on events in the text, such as understanding extreme poverty, or a mother considering giving her baby away.

The third pattern is that of personal experience, which naturally varies from one informant to another. One example is that one of the informants had worked as a nurse on paediatric wards, and was able to infer that the baby was very sick and malnourished early in the story. It seems clear from the data analysed, that these life experiences have played a role in influencing the informants' interpretations of the story.

However, these examples do not constitute an overall pattern across the group. It cannot be said that there is clear evidence resulting from analysis of the data, that the informants' interpretation of the story in either group is directly influenced by cultural background. However, it is likely to have played a role in the way the informants interpreted the story.

## Conclusion

The analysis has identified patterns that have emerged from this investigation and have influenced the informants' interpretation of the text. Motherhood

seems to be a universal characteristic, which transcends cultural differences. Also, the informants' experiences of travel, expatriate life and so on, made them aware of human experiences that seem to go beyond the boundaries of cultural background.

However, it is a complex matter to try to separate one's experiences from one's cultural background, as culture is deeply entrenched in our psyche. It is likely to be a combination of individual experience, in the broader sense, and cultural background that has influenced the informants' interpretation of the story.

In conclusion, the premise for this dissertation that significant cultural differences may become apparent between the native speaker group and the non-native speaker group in the processing of information gathered during the reading of the short story have only been identified in a few individual instances. Whereas the informants' experiences such as motherhood, expatriate life and travel and other individual experiences play a significant role in the informants' interpretation of 'The Shawl' by Cynthia Ozick.

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## **Classroom-oriented Research: Achievements and Challenges**

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The conference will be devoted to various aspects of broadly-understood classroom-oriented research and provide a forum for disseminating latest research findings in this area, which is critical for foreign and second language pedagogy. The event will be of relevance not only to academics, researchers, teacher educators and material writers, but also to language teachers wishing to enhance their instructional practices.

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Abstracts of papers and workshops in the range of 250-300 words should be submitted by e-mail to [classroomresearch2011@gmail.com](mailto:classroomresearch2011@gmail.com) by May 31st, 2011. The proposals should include the title, name, affiliation, e-mail address and a short biographical note, about 60-80 words in length.

Prof. Mirosław Pawlak ([pawlakmi@amu.edu.pl](mailto:pawlakmi@amu.edu.pl)), Adam Mickiewicz University, Kalisz (Chair of the organizing committee / IATEFL RESIG committee member)