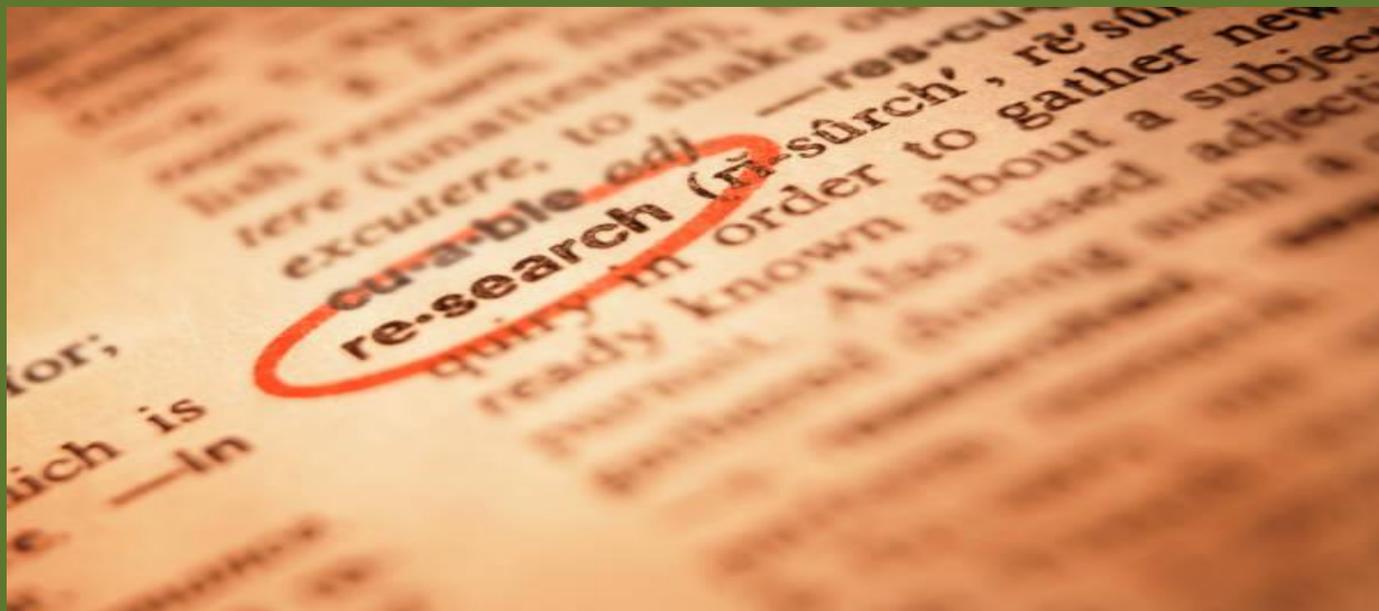




# ELT RESEARCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IATEFL RESEARCH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP



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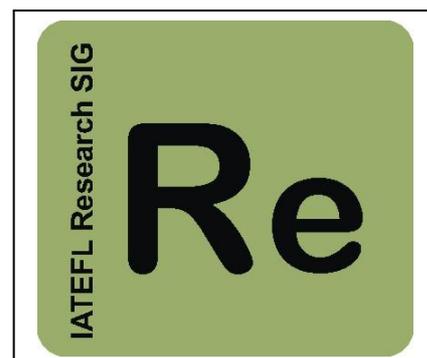
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## About the IATEFL Research SIG

The IATEFL Research SIG (ReSIG) is a unique forum for the discussion of issues connected with research into (or relating to) ELT, bringing together teachers, teacher-researchers, teacher educators and researchers from around the world. In this active community, members share their experiences of research, as well as findings from and interpretations of research, and network face-to-face at regular events, online via our discussion list, and in print via *ELT Research*.



If you are a teacher interested in investigating your own practice, a researcher involved in other kinds of ELT inquiry, a teacher educator engaging others in research or not a researcher but curious about what research is and how you can get involved with and in it, then the Research SIG is for you! Our members come from all around the world and we have a large and diverse committee, reflecting our desire to be as open to members' initiative as much as possible. If you enjoy reading this issue and would like to subscribe and/or join us at future events, you can find out more about how to become a member of ReSIG via our website: [resig.iatefl.org](http://resig.iatefl.org) (in the section titled 'Join us').

You can renew your membership of IATEFL or become a new member of IATEFL (and the Research SIG) online via [www.iatefl.org](http://www.iatefl.org) or you can contact IATEFL Head Office at:

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## About *ELT Research*

Submissions for *ELT Research*, published two to three times a year by the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group (SIG), should be sent to [resig@iatefl.org](mailto:resig@iatefl.org). Please visit the SIG website ([resig.iatefl.org](http://resig.iatefl.org)) for author guidelines (under 'Publications').

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IATEFL retains the right to republish any of the contributions in this issue in future IATEFL publications or to make them available in electronic form for the benefit of its members.

### Editing and layout

This issue was edited by Richard Smith, building on the previous work of Shaida Mohammadi. Formatting and layout were carried out by Gosia Sky.

# From the coordinator

Dear RESEARCH SIG members,

Apologies for the delay in getting this issue to you, but I hope you'll agree it's been worth the wait. We have a new name for the newsletter, *ELT Research*, a new look, and a new editing team coming into place to replace Shaída Mohammadi, who has edited the Research SIG newsletter for five years – thank you, Shaída, for all your hard work! Shaída has now taken on a new role as Treasurer of the SIG, indeed, as of Spring 2012, we have a new, expanded, multi-talented committee, consisting of:

Coordinator / Newsletter Co-editor. RICHARD SMITH.  
 Conference Organizer. MIROSLAW PAWLAK.  
 Development Manager. HARRY KUCHAH.  
 Discussion list moderator. ATANU BHATTACHARYA.  
 Electronic Manager. ANA d'ALMEIDA.  
 Events Coordinator (One-day Workshops). SARAH MERCER.  
 Events Coordinator (IATEFL Conference) SARAH BREWER.  
 Member-at-large (Facebook, Twitter) YASMIN DAR.  
 Member-at-large (Liaison). DEBORAH BULLOCK.  
 Member-at-large (Scholarships, Mentoring). LARYSA SANOTSKA.  
 Membership Secretary. ANNA BROSZKIEWICZ.  
 Newsletter Co-Editor. ANA INÉS SALVI.  
 Newsletter Co-Editor. GOSIA SKY.  
 Recording Secretary / Elections Officer. SHELAGH RIXON.  
 Treasurer. SHAIIDA MOHAMMADI.

You can find out more about committee members on our updated website (another new development since the last newsletter), whose URL is:

<http://resig.iatefl.org>

Please check out the website when you can for more information about all of ReSIG's activities.

My thanks go to all the committee and to retiring members Anthony Bruton and Graham Hall for the hard work they've put in and are putting in. There are a lot of achievements to report, including the following:

## **Clarifying our identity and mission**

Over the last year, we've started to view the SIG as being largely 'about' encouraging and supporting early-stage' researchers and promoting teacher-research (research initiated by and for teachers), while not neglecting the needs of later stage researchers or those engaged in relatively academic forms of research.

We have also begun to place a particular emphasis on sharing information and experiences about various research approaches and methods rather than (only) providing a forum for presentation of research *findings*. At the same time, we feel we have a role in helping increase the accessibility of relatively academic research findings to practitioners, in particular via online discussions of research articles and occasional support for conferences.

## **Online discussions**

In December 2011 we initiated a series of online discussions of articles which have been published in the journal *Language Teaching*. These discussions have been open to all (not only members) via our Yahoo!Group. We have had five lively discussions so far, on topics ranging from the practical relevance of Second Language Acquisition and English as a Lingua Franca research to the benefits of and constraints on teachers' research engagement. We are grateful to Cambridge University Press for making the articles freely available for the duration of the discussions.

## **One-day research method workshops**

ReSIG workshops since January 2012 have been facilitated by Zoltán Dörnyei on Questionnaire Design and Analysis, David Nunan on Qualitative Research and Dick Allwright, Assia Slimani-Rolls and Judith Hanks on Exploratory Practice. These events have been professionally filmed for the benefit of those unable to attend in person, and a number of edited extracts will be placed online later in the year, courtesy of Coventry University. We are now looking forward to a workshop by Anne Burns on Action Research on 3<sup>rd</sup> November in Reading, UK. For all of these events we are proud to have been able to offer scholarships to SIG members who would otherwise have been unable to attend. We're hoping to organize more events outside the UK in future.

## **Looking forward**

Our future plans include a Pre-Conference Event on 'Researching Professional Talk' with Steve Walsh and Steve Mann in Liverpool on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and support for a full-scale conference on Classroom-oriented Research in Poland in October. We are also hoping to extend the benefits we offer to members of the SIG, including building up a mentoring scheme which will bring together relatively experienced researchers and teacher educators with early-stage researchers, sharing of bibliographies and other resources, and enhancement of the space on our web-site which we have dedicated to reports of teacher-research.

**Richard Smith, Research SIG coordinator**

# Feature Article

*Simon Borg, a former coordinator of the SIG, was the facilitator of ReSIG's Pre-Conference Event at the 2011 IATEFL conference In Brighton on 'Doing Quality Research'. The article below was originally published in JACET Journal Vol. 50, pp. 9-13, and is reprinted here with permission.*

## Doing Good Quality Research

**Simon Borg (University of Leeds)**

### Introduction

Research has always been an important aspect of academic life; it is also increasingly being promoted as a central strategy in the development and career advancement of language teaching professionals. For the purposes of this article I will not distinguish between these two groups; rather, my aim is to outline a number of criteria for good quality research which I believe are of relevance to anyone doing research in English language teaching. I will now discuss several criteria in turn.

### 1. Purposeful

Good research has a clear purpose - i.e. it is clear why the study was conducted. We can break this criterion down into three elements. Firstly, clarity of purpose is demonstrated through well thought-out research questions. According to Punch (1998), effective research questions will be clear, specific, answerable, and focus on matters that are worth studying. Secondly, a clear purpose stems from the researcher's ability to problematize the context under study. Problematizing the context means identifying in the classroom, school, system or other educational setting where the research is taking place, an issue that needs to be studied. Third, the purpose of a study can also be defined through an analysis of relevant background literature that creates an argument. A literature review which fails to create an argument lacks a purpose - it may represent a thorough analysis of what others have written, but does not fulfil its purpose unless it demonstrates why the study needs to be conducted.

### 2. Methodologically Appropriate

I have done several projects into what English language teachers think research is. One issue to emerge from this work (e.g. Borg, 2009) is that good research is often associated with quantitative methods involving statistics. This is of course a misconception, and there is no automatic correlation between the particular research methods used and the quality of the research. What is

fundamental, though, is that research methods are chosen appropriately. This means that they are suitable for addressing the study's research questions. It is the researcher's responsibility not only to choose which methods to use in collecting data but to justify those choices - to explain why they were made. As part of this rationale we also need to show an awareness of the limitations of the choices we make (every method has limitations). Good research, then, will be based on appropriately chosen and justified research methods.

### 3. Technically Competent

Good research design is important; executing this design skillfully is critical. I have, for example, read many excellent research proposals which argue very convincingly for the use of semi-structured interviews. In many cases, though, the quality of actual inter views which were later conducted has been poor, often as a result of the researcher's lack of inter viewing skills. Similarly, writing a theoretical argument for the use of questionnaires is easier than designing an effective questionnaire and administering it successfully. Without technical competence - the ability to translate a research plan into action - research cannot be of good quality. This extends to the analysis of data too - if data are not analyzed appropriately, the quality of the research will be questionable. It is essential, then, that researchers have not only theoretical knowledge about research methods but also the skills to implement these methods in collecting and analyzing data. Technically competent data collection and analysis enhance the reliability and validity of a study.

### 4. Makes a Contribution

Good quality research makes a contribution of some kind. This contribution can take many forms. It can be a contribution to a previously studied issue (e.g. providing new insights or extending existing findings, often in a specific context). The contribution may also stem from a focus on an innovative issue - one previously unstudied (e.g. in the late 1990s, research on teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching grammar emerged as an innovative research focus). It can be a contribution to how a particular issue can be studied (i.e. a methodological contribution). Research can also aim to make a theoretical contribution - to provide insights into broader explanatory frameworks for phenomena. 'What contribution does this research make?' is a question we should be able to answer about our work. If we cannot find an answer then it is less likely that those reading or listening to our work are going to see much value in it. Research which confirms what we already know about an issue is not necessarily less valuable, because confirmatory research is important. However, in some areas certain findings are very well-established and simply confirming these again may not be seen as particularly valuable. For example, there has been much research in recent years which shows that teachers' theoretical statements about ideal teaching do not

always reflect what they do in the classroom. Or there have been many studies which show that teachers' beliefs influence their practices. Research which simply confirmed these kinds of findings might not be rated very highly in terms of its contribution; particularly if a researcher's goal is to publish an article in a top research journal, the quality of the contribution the research makes can be the difference between the article being accepted and rejected. A key purpose of the literature review is allowing the researcher to identify where the scope for a contribution in relation to a particular topic is. Research can also make a practical contribution - i.e. it can have clear implications for action to be taken by policy makers, teacher educators, teachers or learners. The impact on practice of educational research is increasingly seen as an important dimension of its value.

## 5. Ethical

Good quality research is ethical - it cares for those participating in the research and ensures that they are respected and that there are no negative consequences for them as a result of the research. Obtaining informed consent from participants is also a key aspect of ethical research. Of course, while in theory ethical principles are very clearly defined, in practice researchers will often face tricky decisions about what to do and which raise ethical questions. For example, telling participants what a study is about may sometimes influence their behaviour and invalidate the findings. In such a case researchers will need to consider how much to reveal in advance about the study (e.g. they may opt to give participants a general description of the study rather than spelling out the detail). Or in some studies it may be difficult to find participants, but without participants there can be no study. In such cases researchers may feel that they need to try to persuade people to participate more forcefully (and pressurizing people in this way may not be ethical). Ethical issues arise even when we are researching our own classrooms. We need to think about our learners, and, for example, to ensure that the research has no negative effects on any of them. Most research associations have codes of ethical practice (see, for example, <http://www.bera.ac.uk/files/guidelines/ethica1.pdf> for that of the British Educational Research Association).

## 6. Critical

Criticality is a quality that permeates all elements of good quality research. It is shown in the way the focus for the research is defined - i.e. in the quality of the literature review and in the way that the researcher avoids unjustified assumptions about the issues under study. Criticality is demonstrated through the appropriate choice of research methods, with an awareness of the limitations of the methods chosen and not just their strengths. The presentation and discussion of findings also present many opportunities for researchers to demonstrate their criticality; for example, a critical

stance is seen when researchers ensure that all claims are supported by evidence and demonstrate an ability to consider alternative interpretations (not only the most obvious ones) of findings. Researchers who monitor their own biases and reflect on how these might influence their work are also being critical. One final example of criticality relates to the researcher's use of terminology. For example, I regularly see research proposals where a term like 'teacher-centred' is introduced and used with the assumption that everyone accepts the negative connotations of this term. A critical stance here would introduce the term, show an awareness of the connotations it has, and define what it means for the researcher. Criticality is a fundamental quality of good quality research. In its absence, researchers may simply engage in an exercise of finding evidence to confirm conclusions they have already reached; this is the antithesis of what research is meant to involve.

## 7. Coherent

The final criterion for good quality research I will discuss here is coherence. A study may be well-designed and competently executed. The researcher may have adopted a critical stance throughout. Ultimately, though, research is assessed on the basis of how it is reported. This can be orally or in writing but in either case if the report lacks coherence the audience will not develop a good impression of the work. In one sense, then, the quality of research is defined by the skill with which it is communicated. It is important, therefore, for researchers to dedicate suitable time to preparing to communicate their work. In the case of an oral presentation, for example, I always advise my research students to ensure their focus is clear and specific, that the amount of information they present is not over-whelming for the audience, and that the logic of the talk (i.e. the links between different points) is obvious. For written reports, the same guidance applies; if readers can discern the structure of the report and see a logic to this structure, then they are (as long as other issues of quality discussed above have been addressed) more likely to develop a positive impression of the work. Coherence also refers to the consistency of a piece of research - e.g. the data that are presented should relate to the questions that the researcher wants to answer; the key issues covered in the discussion section of the report should relate to points previously highlighted in the findings. Consistency of this kind enhances the overall coherence of a research report.

## Conclusion

To sum up, then, I believe that we can enhance the quality of our research (and better evaluate the research of others) by asking ourselves this series of questions:

- Is the purpose of the research clear?
- Have research methods been appropriately chosen and justified?

- Have data been collected and analyzed in a technically competent manner?
- Does the work make some kind of contribution to knowledge, with potential implications for practice?
- Is the research ethical?
- Does the researcher adopt a critical stance?
- Is the research reported in a manner that is coherent?

These and other criteria for assessing the quality of research have been discussed in the research methods literature (e.g. Alton-Lee, 1998; Borg, 2004; Davis, 1992; Denscombe, 2002; Pawson, et al., 2003; Seale, 1999) and readers interested in this topic may also want to consult these sources.

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## IATEFL Conference 2013, Liverpool

Research SIG Pre-Conference Event:

### 'Researching Professional Talk'

**Date:** 8 April 2013

**Presenters:** Steve Walsh (Newcastle University) and Steve Mann (Warwick University)

Further details:

<http://resig.weebly.com/events.html>

Booking for this day-long workshop is now open, via the online conference booking form: [https://secure.iatefl.org/registration/conf\\_reg\\_login.php](https://secure.iatefl.org/registration/conf_reg_login.php)

There is a scholarship opportunity for Research SIG members wishing to attend this event. More details here: <http://resig.weebly.com/scholarships.html>

### Deadlines:

Scholarship application deadline: 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Earlybird (cheaper) rate for booking: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013

# Roundtable Discussion Report

*This is the first part of a two-part report on a roundtable discussion titled 'The state of ELT research in the UK' at the September 2011 British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) annual conference University of West of England, Bristol. Panel participants were: Olwyn Alexander, Adrian Holliday, Richard Kiely, John Knagg, James Simpson, Richard Smith, Catherine Walter and Cyril Weir. The discussion was organized by Richard Smith and chaired by Phillida Schellekens.*

## The State of ELT Research in the UK (Part I)

**Richard Smith (University of Warwick) with John Knagg (The British Council)**

### Introduction

The panel discussion reported on here was organized to complement a recent British Council initiative to survey 'ELT research' in the UK from 2005 onwards. This initiative has resulted in two 'Directories' to date (Rixon and Smith 2010, and Smith with Choi, Reid, Sky and Hunter 2011), plus a searchable database. All of these are freely available online at:

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/elt-research>.

This survey project was initiated for reasons which were explained in detail to the audience by John Knagg, and his contribution is reproduced verbatim and in full below. As Richard Smith – the academic coordinator for the project since it began late in 2008 – and his co-investigator Shelagh Rixon have previously written,

*one concern we had before embarking on this venture was whether present-day university-based research would turn out to have relevance to ELT at all. There also seemed to be some scepticism amongst British Council ELT specialists about the value to ELT of much academic research, reflecting concerns within the profession more generally. This pointed to a need, expressed by the British Council to us, specifically to seek out 'ELT research', not simply 'applied linguistic research'*

(Rixon and Smith 2010: 11)

It is this issue of *relevance* (of research to practice) that will be focused on in the present report. In this first, shorter, part, a definition is provided of the newly introduced term 'ELT research' and an overview is provided of the *Directory of UK ELT Research* project methodology and findings (these constituted Richard Smith's introductory contributions to the BAAL round table discussion). John Knagg's transcribed contribution to the panel discussion then follows, in which he reflects on the origins of the project and both describes and evaluates some additional findings. Further remarks on the 'state of UK ELT research' by the other panellists – Olwyn Alexander, Adrian Holliday, Richard Kiely, Catherine Walter and Cyril Weir – will be recorded in Part 2 of the report, in issue 28 of this newsletter.

### Project outputs and basic methodology

There were two phases of data collection, resulting in two separate books, one for 2005-08 (Rixon and Smith 2010) and another for 2009-10 (Smith with Choi, Reid, Sky and Hunter 2011). Data for the entire period 2005-10 has also been made available via a searchable online database at <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/elt-research>.

The main working principles for collecting data were as follows: Key contacts were identified in UK institutions – they had responsibility for selecting, judging the relevance of and inputting entries (via an online form); and all entries had to be publicly accessible in some form. There were 20 optional descriptors which could be used, ranging from 'Assessment' to 'Writing'. Details were also requested of country of research, learners' background, and institutional level. Fuller details of the data collection procedures are provided in the Introductions to the two downloadable books cited above. Thus, rather than describing in further detail the procedures for data collection, the next section of this report highlights the definitions and parameters set up at an early stage for deciding what constituted 'ELT research', in other words for bringing to life this term.

### How did we define 'ELT research'?

Some major decisions needed to be made in the initial planning phase of the project regarding what was to be meant by 'research', 'ELT research', and 'UK ELT research'. For the purposes of the project, we decided to define 'research' as 'original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding'. The term was also taken to include 'scholarship', that is, the 'creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of an activity or area of study' – in this case, ELT. Accordingly, 'ELT research' was defined as 'any research whose data and/or findings relate directly to the teaching, learning or assessment of English as a Foreign, Second or Additional Language'. 'UK research' was itself defined as research undertaken by anyone who was currently (that is, at the census point for the survey) a member of staff or associate of a bona

fide educational institution with a base in the UK: the actual research may have taken place anywhere in the world, not necessarily in the UK.

Types of entry we decided to solicit for the Directory included journal articles, chapters in edited books, authored books, and papers in conference proceedings. However, contributors were also encouraged to submit details of any unpublished but electronically accessible items, and doctoral theses supervised. Details were also requested of any externally funded research projects during the period in question.

### Some extra findings

The following overall statistics were presented at the outset of the BAAL roundtable discussion. For the period 2005-10 there were 1,756 entries from 66 different departments or institutions in the UK. Nine departments/institutions accounted for over half of the total number of entries. There was an increase in average number of entries for each year, with 1,039 entries for 2005-08 and 717 for 2009-10. There was also an increase in rate of entries for externally funded projects, with 61 being recorded for 2005-08 and 54 for 2009-10. The top funders (according to number of projects funded, not amount of funding) were The British Council (16 projects funded out of 107 in total, 2005-10) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), with 10 projects funded, 2005-10. The British Council showed noticeably increased activity in funding ELT research projects over the most recent two years (2009-10) (for the reasons, see John Knagg's contribution below).

For the period 2005-10, descriptors with more than 100+ entries were English language (199), Assessment (175), Methodology (130), Teacher education (119), Cultural issues (113) and Writing (103). Where location of research was concerned, the top four countries were the UK (338), 'various' (130), China (33) and Hungary (28), while the top four countries for learner origin were 'various' (337), China (64), Germany (17) and Hungary (17). Regarding institutional level concerned in the research, tertiary came out top (352 entries), followed by adult (139), secondary (85), primary (71) and pre-primary (2). Doctoral theses were more likely to focus on overseas secondary / primary contexts. The top doctoral descriptors for 2009-10 were curriculum/syllabus (21), followed by cultural issues (20) and English language (19).

### Panel Discussion Contribution by John Knagg (British Council)

"Interestingly, I think I'm the only speaker who is not an ELT researcher, at least I don't see myself as one, and I'm the only speaker who doesn't have an entry in the book. However, I do claim to be the inventor of the concept of the book within the British Council, thinking that this would be a useful thing for the Council to do.

And it fits in within the Council's aims of contributing to a wider knowledge of English, of promoting things that are going on here in the UK and promoting educational collaboration internationally. And it comes at a time where we felt we wanted to reinforce the message that the British Council is an important global player in the world of English language teaching and learning around the world. It's a role that the Council has played and been seen in for decades in fact, and one which we felt had been lost in some areas over the past couple of decades. And the idea for this, in a way, came to me partly from a BAAL Conference session by Emma Marsden and Susan Graham, which was looking at UK PhDs and analysing UK PhDs about language teaching and in the area of language teaching. I was amazed by the difficulty that they had in finding these PhDs. They had to go in to the British Library database of PhDs and it wasn't at all easy to find them. And then I thought there must be an easier way to put this together for ELT and it kind of grew out of that and then I started talking to academics about it, and then handed it over to Richard and his team at Warwick to plan it.

Step 2 was to do it. And now it's been done, twice. We've got 6 years of data. And now, the next thing to do is to think how it can be used and what it tells us. That's the background. I think it's left us with a very useful database.

And now I have a few critical thoughts about what it does tell us about the state of UK ELT research. One thing... I just would like you to think for a minute about this: Our numbers suggest that there are over a billion learners of English in the world, and maybe something in the region of 11 million teachers of English around the world. Now, just think, in that universe of English language learning, what proportion of it is at primary and secondary level? In other words, at school level, up to the age of, let's say, 18? Is it 10%? Is it 99%? What proportion of the whole English language activity is at that level? [An audience participant suggests 80%.] My best guess is 85%. But it could be 80, could be 90, it's something around that number. The other 10, 15, 20 % is in the area of 'post-18', including Higher Education.

Now, the interesting thing when we analyse the 1,700+ pieces of research done over the last 6 years is that whereas we see that overall about 85% of activity is at school level, only 25% of those outputs and research projects are to do with school level; with 75% to do with post-18 contexts – higher education, especially, and adults.

I then thought, well, that's very strange that ELT research doesn't seem to reflect the universe that it's dealing with, in a way. Well, I thought, maybe it's different when we look at PhDs because PhD students will want to improve their systems from around the world and they will be looking at primary and secondary levels, which is where most of the teaching and learning takes

place. But no, I'm afraid not. This time, we've got more, but still only up to 36% of the research that is to do with school level learning.

So then I thought, well, OK, there were other reasons. Obviously, PhD candidates... maybe their first aim isn't to do something that reflects the needs of society so much as yet, for their PhD; maybe, it's easier to research in a university context to get a PhD.

So, let's look at the externally funded projects, that is, research that is paid for by another organization. So, I looked at that. But I still found that even out of research projects that were paid for by outside organisations only 28% focused on school level, with 57% focusing on university level and 72% on university and adults together. Very strange.

My second innovation was the British Council's ELT Research Awards Scheme, which goes beyond our having a role in pulling together research to actually facilitating certain types of research. Of nearly 60 different universities in the Directory database and in the 3 years of the running of our research award scheme, 42 universities have expressed interest in putting in a submission, so a good proportion of them in other words. We've so far funded about 19 projects, of which 10 are related to primary and secondary, and only 5 to higher education, so at least we are in the 65-70% mark in aiming towards research reflecting the universal reality of English language learning.

So, the last thing I'd say is this ... I've only been here [at the BAAL conference] half a day but already I hear a lot of talk about the REF [the UK 'Research Excellence Framework' – a research assessment exercise due to take place at the end of 2013] It's a very strange idea for me, not being an academic researcher, that suddenly impact has become something that is measured – and I think this perception is shared by my colleagues from the British Council overseas. Because, for us, impact is what it is all about and should be a given. The good thing is that we've got a great resource here in the *Directory*, which allows us to talk about research with much more information to hand, but I do wonder whether ELT researchers in the UK are researching the right thing.

*Further opinions on the state of UK ELT Research will be shared in Part 2, in a future issue. In the meantime, if you wish to contribute your own opinions about anything you've read here, don't hesitate to get in touch (resig.iatefl.org) or participate in the Directory project discussion forum:*

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/transform/directory-uk-elt-research/blog>

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# Practitioner Research

**Edited by Yasmin Dar, Paula Rebolledo and Ana Inés Salvi**

*In this new regular feature or 'space' in the newsletter we invite teachers, academics and postgraduate students alike to get involved in research into their own practice and to share their experiences, reflections and views on research they have done in their own classrooms. We believe that by doing so, apart from developing our own practice, we will be contributing to the development of a field within English Language Teaching that is still relatively new and needs to be boosted. We look forward to welcoming your contributions. Since this is the first in a new series for which together we'll be responsible, we begin by sharing a few of the ideas we three have shared together so far about advantages of practitioner research, and what we can do to encourage it, and the reporting of it:*

There are different kinds of research. There is research done by a person who is investigating somebody else's classroom; there is research which is carried out by teachers themselves in their own classrooms; and there is research which is carried out by both the teacher and his/ her students (the kind of research advocated by Dick Allwright in his most recent publications). The last of these is the kind of research I have recently been involved in because I think both teacher and students have to benefit from this experience. Embarking on this kind of research has allowed me to get to know my students better, develop a closer relationship with them, and get to know what they need and enjoy the most; and to be much more in control of my teaching than ever before, which was satisfying for me, and beneficial for my students. (Ana Inés Salvi)

Without calling it practitioner research – or 'research' at all - one presenter I saw at the last IATEFL conference actually carried out research which would fit the definition of exploratory practice (though with some features of action research as well). If he and others wrote up such research, then the bottom-up teacher-led research which seems so hard to find actually published, would become accessible through the Research SIG newsletter. (Paola Rebolledo)

Research for me means carrying out an exploration of a classroom teaching and learning issue where the outcome of the investigation could lead to better understandings. I like the idea of being in control of my research in the sense that I can make decisions on whether practical solutions are needed or whether I wish to continue the investigation by engaging in mutual support with other classroom teachers via discussion forums and face to face workshops.

Teachers are very busy and I imagine, like me, trying to balance work and home life, so to save on preparation time, and to meet the needs of visual and auditory learning styles, perhaps other forms of communication (apart from the newsletter) could be useful for sharing information, for instance, teacher videos and podcasts. (Yasmin Dar)

*We'd like to investigate the possible use of other media (e.g. via the Research SIG website) for encouraging oral reports of practitioner research in the future. For this issue, though, Yasmin Dar has agreed to write about her recent experiences with Exploratory Practice. Over to Yasmin ...*

## **Exploratory Practice: Investigating My Own Classroom Pedagogy**

**Yasmin Dar (University of Leicester)**

### **Introduction**

The idea of carrying out research that would be directly meaningful to me and my learners really appealed to me when I had to choose from a range of approaches to carry out a research project for my MA dissertation (2009). Luckily for me, my supervisor Simon Gieve introduced me to the EP (Exploratory Practice) way of doing research which I found useful, particularly because it is a holistic way of investigating my classroom pedagogy. The aim of this article is to share with you how I applied the principles of EP and hopefully inspire other language teachers to either try it out for themselves or find out more about Exploratory Practice (Allwright, 2003; Hanks and Allwright, 2009).

### **What is Exploratory Practice (EP)?**

Exploratory practice (Allwright, 2003; Allwright and Hanks, 2009) is an ethical way of doing research that is 'indefinitely sustainable' which promotes the idea of 'on-going' rather than experimental classroom research. For example, data is collected with minimal or no disruption to normal classroom teaching and learning, and most importantly the aim of EP is to turn issues and problems into 'puzzles' because, firstly, not all puzzles are problematic and, secondly, not all teachers are comfortable to admit that there is a 'problem'. Thirdly, puzzles may emerge from the following: a teacher's long term concerns, learner questions, or a direct prompt, for example, at an EP workshop/forum (Allwright and Hanks, 2009).

Exploratory Practice appeals to me because my personal priority is to use a research framework that allows me the opportunity to explore ‘why’ my classroom teaching and learning may not be working so well at times, in order to first increase my ‘understanding’ of the situation before thinking about what I should do next in terms of, whether I acknowledge that there is a problem that needs some practical solutions or if I decide to accept that the issue I have investigated will remain a classroom reality (Gieve and Miller, 2006:20-21) that is specific to me and my learners, instead of assuming from the start that me or my students are experiencing a problem that needs to be solved. Interestingly, EP also appeals to me because it also encourages investigation into why things are working well in a language classroom (Allwright, 2003:117; Allwright and Hanks, 2009:176-177).

The six principles of EP can be divided into three areas: (Allwright, 2011)

*‘What’*

1. Focus on quality *of life* as the main issue.
2. Work to *understand* it before thinking about solving a problem.

*‘Who’*

3. Involve *everybody* as practitioners developing their own understandings
4. Work to bring people *together* in a common enterprise.
5. Work cooperatively for mutual development.

*‘How’*

6. Make it a sustainable enterprise.

*PLUS* two practical suggestions to keep going indefinitely:

- a) Minimise the effort involved.
- b) Integrate the work for understanding into normal pedagogic practice.

My puzzle: ‘*why don’t my students take responsibility for their learning outside class?*’ (Principle 1).

I looked forward to applying the EP principles to explore an issue that had been puzzling me ever since I had started teaching international students on pre-sessional EAP courses in a university context between 2009/10.

### Context

I decided to investigate my puzzle with a group of twelve international students that I had been teaching since January (2011) on a 10 week EAP pre-sessional course. They were aged between 18-30 (9 females and 3 males) from Saudi Arabia, China and Kurdistan, who needed to pass a total of four blocks of pre-sessional courses in order to enrol onto their MA programmes. They held BA

degrees from their home countries and had a current English language level equivalent to IELTS 4.5/5.

### Data collection using regular classroom activities (Principle 3 and 6)

My students seemed enthusiastic and eager in class which I thought I could use to maximise their learning outside class time by carefully picking out extra learning opportunities such as setting homework tasks where they had to do some research on classroom topics to write paragraphs. From the start of the course, they all seemed to look forward to receiving homework, but only a few actually completed it, and I needed to identify the underlying reasons before I made a decision about my next step (Allwright and Hanks, 2009).

As part of my ‘normal’ classroom pedagogy (Allwright, 2003:121), I carefully selected homework tasks so that the students could revisit and practice the target language that had been covered in each class. For instance, in the last 5 minutes of each class, I would explain instructions for their homework, for example, to follow a link for a website to practice a grammar point covered in class, and/or carry out specific research on a topic covered in class and write a paragraph which they must email to me so that I could check it and provide individual feedback. I would also email the group with these instructions.

To collect the data, at the start of each class I exploited my group’s pair-work and group-work discussion activities (Allwright and Hanks, 2009:155-157) by including the following topic: “*Ask your partner if they have completed their homework. If the answer is no, ask why?*”. My role was to note down the students’ answers not only for data purposes but also for peer/tutor feedback on key pronunciation and grammar errors during the activity. During class feedback I would summarise the main reasons students had given for not completing their ‘homework’, and then ask the following question for whole class discussion, “*Can you think of any ideas of how to solve these problems?*” which generated key suggestions that I myself could have suggested but instead the students had to work hard to make their meaning clear by self, peer and tutor correction (Principles: 3, 4 and 5). The common answers (Allwright 2006, in Gieve and Miller, 2006:13) suggested that some students did not have enough time due to domestic commitments such as buying ingredients to cook fresh meals every night. However, I was surprised to discover that most students were not as computer literate as I had expected, as their feedback suggested that they needed to be shown step by step how to use the virtual learning environment (VLE) platform that is specifically used by the university.

## Implications for me and my learners (Principles 2 and 5)

The data supplied me with findings that were available immediately and were relevant to my context (Allwright and Hanks, 2009:198). For example,

- Some practical changes were needed in my teaching practice. For instance, I decided to offer IT support by providing photo shots with step by step instructions on how to access specific resources, as well as using the classroom computer and whiteboard to carry out a demonstration.
- Some students seemed to show resistance to engage in extra learning activities outside class time. I decided to accept their resistance, but continued to gently encourage them to complete their homework.

## Conclusion

I initially used the principles of EP to carry out a research project for my dissertation, but I found the whole experience personally more rewarding than researching my classroom with a problem/solution focus (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, cited in Allwright and Hanks, 2009:144), so much so that I chose to continue using the principles of Exploratory Practice to regularly research my classroom practice after I had finished my MA. This case study has hopefully demonstrated that the nature of EP encourages data to be collected with minimum time and effort, which for me means less chance of reaching burnout whilst researching my classroom pedagogy, and I have also tried to show the benefit of doing research where the results from my data are immediate and relevant to my specific context (Allwright, 2003:118; Allwright, 2006:15).

If you are inspired or have critical comments about Exploratory Practice then perhaps you might like to ask a question or start a debate on the EP Yahoo discussion forum:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/exploratorypractice/> . I have set up this forum in order to continue an informal dialogue between teachers for giving and receiving ongoing mutual support, for example, by helping each other to turn a potential classroom teaching/learning issue into a puzzle, or for sharing EP stories.

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IATEFL is a vibrant teachers' association that aims to connect and support teachers throughout the world. Being able to network with other professionals from around the globe can add a new dimension to your teaching and your own development.

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# MA Dissertation Research

*This is a new column – intended to encourage MA students to write up their research up in the form of an article, and to encourage MA supervisors to mentor students towards publication! SHI Xuanzhi – whose MA dissertation was supervised by **Dr. Hugo Santiago Sanchez** at the University of Warwick in summer 2011 – is the first to take up the challenge. If you have supervised a good MA dissertation, why not encourage and mentor your student to write a 2,000-word article for a future issue, possibly co-authoring it with them?*

## An investigation of teachers' perceptions of implementing cooperative learning among East Asian learners

**SHI Xuanzhi (Minjiang University, China)**

### Introduction

In recent decades, cooperative, or collaborative, learning has attracted growing interest among language teachers. The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions of implementing cooperative learning with East Asian learners. In contrast with language classrooms in western countries, cooperative learning in East Asian countries seems to be still in its infancy, with traditional teacher-fronted instruction still in a dominant position. For instance, in Chinese EFL classrooms teaching is widely characterized by teacher-fronted instruction which mainly includes text explanation, grammar instruction and intensive form-focused drills. Accordingly, there are limited interactions among students in classrooms, which leads to criticisms of Chinese students lacking competence in listening and speaking. I undertook this research, then, partly in order for it to be practically valuable for Chinese EFL teachers, in particular, in learning how to facilitate interactions among students. The research purpose is to understand and describe teachers' perceptions of cooperative learning without placing judgment on them, and to understand and describe contextual factors which might be seen to influence these perceptions.

### Brief literature review and research questions

In the past three decades, a wide range of research has been conducted on cooperative learning. Issues including group formation, task design, teachers' roles and pedagogical techniques to facilitate cooperative learning have been focused on in other researchers' studies.

With respect to group formation, Kagan & Kagan (1994) and Kowal & Swain (1994) maintain that two is an ideal size for a 'group' since pairs of people have deeper interactions. However, McCafferty et al. (2006) claim larger groups have the advantage for more complex tasks which require students to have a wide range of skills and knowledge. In order to discover what (some) teachers think of this issue, I adopted the following first research question:

1. What criteria do teachers adopt for forming cooperative learning groups?

Moving on to task design, two concepts in particular – 'positive interdependence' and 'individual accountability' – have been highlighted as desirable in previous work (e.g. Johnson et al. 2002). In order to ensure positive interdependence, when teachers design tasks they are advised (ibid.) to consider this from the perspectives of outcomes, roles, resources, sources and identities. At the same time, ensuring individual accountability can help avoid free-rider effects, requiring the individuals within a group to contribute to the final group outcome. In order to discover what teachers' perceptions are in this area, I set up the following, second research question:

2. What criteria do teachers consider when they design cooperative learning tasks?

Edge (1993) has specified the following roles teachers can play in cooperative learning: being an encourager of students' participation, a monitor to observe their performance, a praiser to give them positive feedback and a checker to see whether they understand the teacher's instructions. I adopted the following research question in this area:

3. What are teachers' perceptions of their roles when students are engaged in cooperative learning?

Finally, most researchers agree on the importance of teaching students cooperative learning skills before or during tasks (Blatchford et al., 2006). Gillies (2004) found students had a greater sense of enjoyment and achieved higher learning outcomes if they were taught cooperative learning skills before engaging in tasks. My final question addressed teachers' perceptions in this area of how to facilitate cooperative learning, and was:

#### 4. What pedagogical techniques do teachers think should be adopted to facilitate cooperative learning?

Thus, adopting the framework of other researchers (e.g. McCafferty et al. 2006), my research focuses on some British and Chinese teachers' perceptions regarding the following four issues: group formation, task design, teachers' roles and pedagogical techniques to facilitate cooperative learning.

### Research context

The research was conducted in two stages in two different contexts. In the first stage, I focused on four British EFL teachers' perceptions of cooperative learning. The four British teachers (Teachers A, B, C & D) were currently teaching East Asian students or had over 10 years' prior teaching experience in East Asian countries. In the second stage, the focus was on three Chinese teachers (Teachers E, F & G), each with ten years' or more experience, and their perceptions of cooperative learning, including perceptions of the appropriateness of the British teachers' practices in their own contexts (university, senior high and junior high school, respectively). This stage was of essential importance to the whole research since the ultimate research objective was to explore teachers' cognition regarding cooperative learning in East Asian contexts (in China particularly) as well as the feasibility of Chinese teachers implementing cooperative learning.

The choice of engaging in two-stage research on teachers' perceptions of cooperative learning instead of only researching the Chinese context can be justified on the following grounds. Firstly, as mentioned above, cooperative learning in East Asian countries is still in its infancy. Therefore, it seems valuable for British teachers' perceptions of cooperative learning to be disseminated and discussed. However, the research on British teachers' perceptions was intended mainly to provide preliminary data to help in the investigation of Chinese teachers' perceptions.

### Research methodology

In this project, I adopted a multi-method approach in collecting both naturally occurring data and generated data. Non-participant observation was adopted to research the phenomenon in a natural setting (the classrooms of Teachers A to D), while generated data methods consisted of stimulated recall (with Teacher A) and semi-structured interviews (with all participants). Thus, three research methods were adopted in the research project – semi-structured interview, observation and stimulated recall interview. For semi-structured interviews with all teachers, interview questions were designed to obtain background information about teachers as well as their perceptions of cooperative learning. I conducted face-to-face interviews with Teacher A, B, C and D and email-based interviews with Teacher E, F and G.

The lessons I observed (and audio-recorded) involved English for Academic Purposes in a British university, and were taught by Teachers A to D. In the lessons, the students were mainly from East Asian countries and pair / group work was frequently adopted in class. After the observations, I was able to conduct one stimulated recall interview, with Teacher A. I used my audio-recording and a transcription I had made of her lesson as well as observation notes as stimuli to help her recall her interactive decisions and the rationale behind her decisions in class.

### Findings

All the interviewees expressed views relating to each of the four research questions. Via coding of the observational and interview data, several themes emerged under each research question, as presented below:

#### 1. What criteria do teachers adopt for forming cooperative learning groups?

##### *Group size*

The British teachers concurred that group size for cooperative learning depends on the type of activity. For example, an interview activity may only need pairs of students while a crossword task may require groups of four students. The Chinese teachers agreed with their British counterparts' perceptions that group size depends on the type of activity. Teacher E thought four may be an appropriate number, but on some occasions students can be also divided into large-sized groups, for project-type activities. On the other hand, she thought there could be conflicts among students if a group exceeds six students.

##### *Heterogeneity*

Teachers may decide to form heterogenous groups on the basis of students' language proficiency, gender balance, learning resources they have access to, and so on. For instance, weaker students may be asked to cooperate with stronger students (weaker students may benefit from the stronger ones, while stronger ones consolidate their existing knowledge).

##### *Randomness*

Teachers may form groups at random for the sake of convenience.

##### *Common interests*

Teachers may form groups according to students' common interests in particular project-type activities.

#### 2. What criteria do teachers say should be considered when they design cooperative learning tasks?

### *Motivation*

Both the British and Chinese interviewees put motivation as their first consideration when designing cooperative tasks. As Teacher F elucidated, tasks should motivate students in terms of the topic, the format and the form of production. It was widely acknowledged among all the interviewees that designing 'real-life' tasks was a top priority.

### *Explicit goals*

All the interviewees maintained that cooperative tasks should have explicit goals, which help students realize they will make improvements through completing them. However, the goal of tasks needs to vary according to different types of class. Considering the Chinese ELT context, Teacher G thought tasks should facilitate students' grammar learning since grammar teaching is one of the most focused aspects in Chinese ELT, particularly at senior high schools.

### *Positive interdependence / Individual accountability*

One Chinese teacher (Teacher E) claimed that a good task should propel students to rely on each other, thus facilitating cooperation. Therefore, she recommended teachers should give feedback or marks to groups as a whole as well as to individuals. Thus, she insisted that ensuring individual accountability did not mean sacrificing positive interdependence or changing the nature of cooperative learning to individual learning.

## **3. What are teachers' perceptions of their roles when students are engaged in cooperative learning?**

### *Resource provider*

Teacher B thought teachers should play the role of a resource provider. Before lessons, teachers should prepare resources to be used in the activity such as textbooks, handouts or dictionaries.

### *Understanding checker*

Teacher F thought teachers should check students' understanding after they give instructions. Otherwise, students may risk going onto a wrong track in the activity. Teacher E proposed that teachers should ask individuals to retell instructions in their own words.

### *Activity monitor*

When students are engaged in cooperative learning, teachers should move around, monitor students' performances and intervene in students' discussion if conflicts happen among students. However, Teacher E maintained teachers should avoid intervening in students' discussion too much so as not to interrupt them.

### *Feedback giver*

Teacher F thought teachers should give corrective and affective feedback to students after they accomplish their tasks. For example, teachers should give students praise if they do well in the activity; on the other hand,

teachers should also point out mistakes and instruct students how to correct them.

## **4. What pedagogical techniques do teachers think should be adopted to facilitate cooperative learning?**

### *Letting students share limited resources*

The British teacher I conducted stimulated recall with (Teacher A) maintained that letting students share limited resources would draw students' attention in class and guarantee individual accountability among students. In Teacher A's lessons, it could be found that pairs of students shared a photocopy of the listening transcript after a listening exercise.

### *Explaining the rationale of tasks*

Both the British and Chinese teachers attach great importance to the rationale of tasks. When students have difficulties in understanding task objectives, teachers should explain the rationale of tasks to assist students in going on the right track.

### *Offering students various choices*

On some occasions students are unwilling to engage in cooperative learning because they do not like the task or do not want to cooperate with particular other students. To remove these barriers, Teacher G mentioned she would ask the students to select their own partners, or offer students various choices of task and materials. Sometimes teachers can also ask certain students to be observers of their colleagues' performance.

## **Data discussion**

Comparing the British and Chinese teachers' perceptions, I found their perceptions were overall very similar while there were some differences. One thing that can be inferred from some of my data (not reported here) is that teachers' schooling experiences of cooperative learning may be closely associated with their perceptions. The major difference between the Chinese and British teachers' perceptions was that the British teachers had themselves experienced and were in some cases still experiencing cooperative learning (for example, Teacher A had meetings for cooperative development with her colleagues), while the Chinese teachers had had almost no experience of cooperative learning in their schooling time. Consequently, the British teachers tend to accept cooperative learning and implement it frequently while the Chinese teachers mostly still hold vigilant views with regard to it. This seems congruent with Kennedy's (1990:17) claim, 'Teachers acquire seemingly indelible imprints from their own experiences as students and these imprints are tremendously difficult to shake'.

Nevertheless, the Chinese teachers' perceptions seem to have altered as a consequence of teacher education. Through various forms of teacher education programme such as public research conferences, talks and

workshops, they started thinking of cooperative learning as an effective approach to maximize students' interaction. Also noteworthy is the fact that contextual factors including the flexibility of syllabus, the pressure of exams and classroom conditions may affect teachers' perceptions of cooperative learning and thus may have caused differences in the Chinese and British teachers' perceptions. For example, the national college entrance exam in China functions as a hurdle test for students to further their study in universities. Due to the limited number of university enrollments, this highly competitive exam is top of students and teachers' agendas. Thus, teachers prefer to teach students exam strategies and Chinese students and teachers may tend to hold negative attitudes towards cooperative learning unless it can be seen to contribute to exam success.

## Conclusion

This study has implications for Chinese pre-service and in-service teachers, syllabus and curriculum designers, teacher education programme designers and disciplinary researchers.

The Chinese teachers' perceptions revealed in this study as well as the methods proposed by the British teachers provide useful insights for Chinese teachers who struggle with implementing cooperative learning. For syllabus and curriculum designers, the contextual constraints revealed seem to indicate that relatively flexible syllabi and curricula are needed to provide teachers with freedom to engage students in cooperative learning in their lessons. The study also contributes to teacher education programme design, indicating some ideas that can be introduced to teachers in China.

Despite the potential benefits of the study, some limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the number of participants was limited and each of the eight teachers has unique characteristics. As a result, the project findings cannot be generalised to other contexts and practitioners. Secondly, due to practical considerations, the data collection process also had some limitations. For example, I was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews with the Chinese teachers and, although I attempted to make the email-based interviews as interactive as possible, the interviewees may still have felt restricted when extending their thoughts through emails. Thirdly, I am aware that my interpretation of the data, though validated and accepted by the interviewees at the end of the project, is still based on my own understanding, which may be biased by my own academic and professional background. Based on the findings, implications and limitations of my research, I will conclude with the following recommendations for future research. For researchers particularly interested in cooperative learning, one focus of future research should include under-explored regional, educational and institutional contexts. In particular, more attention should be paid to East Asian contexts, where cooperative learning is gaining

increasing attention. For researchers interested in teacher cognition, the impact of teachers' prior education, professional development and contextual factors on conceptions of and attitudes towards cooperative learning is worthy of further investigation. For example, one kind of interesting study could be to conduct in-depth research with one teacher who teaches different levels of students and different types of lessons, for the sake of exploring differences in perceptions according to level and context.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to give my sincere thanks to my dissertation supervisor Dr. Hugo Santiago Sanchez who gave me detailed guidance, considerable support and encouragement at each stage I also wish to express my gratitude to all the teachers at the University of Warwick who gave me instruction during the research project.

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# Research SIG Day Papers at IATEFL 2011 (Brighton)

*For every IATEFL conference, the Research SIG committee selects a number of submitted papers specifically for its 'track' at the conference. This then constitutes a day of presentations and workshops. Two presenters from the Research SIG Day in Brighton 2011 have submitted written forms of their papers: Tim Moore and Sandra Lucietto.*

## Teacher Personas: Understanding Your Context

**Tim Moore (British Council)**

### Introduction

At a time of global austerity, language learners across the world are, more than ever, becoming more discerning "customers". The days of using generic coursebooks that are often both culturally and linguistically inappropriate for the contexts they are used in is coming to an end as these "ENOP" (English for No Obvious Purpose) courses that have been the mainstay for many ELT teaching centres across the world for many years, witness a decline in student numbers in many countries.

At the beginning of 2009 in the British Council teaching centre in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam we were witnessing increasing demand for YL courses alongside a reduction in the number of adult learners, trends which mirrored the conclusions of Graddol's (2006) research which identified a number of key areas in which the ELT industry would change in coming years.

In light of these factors, the British Council in East Asia has engaged in region-wide research to identify what learners in the different contexts in East Asia perceive to be the ideal teacher of adult learners. The aim of this was to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach to language learning and teaching and provide more customised courses for learners, marrying their language learning "wants" with their immediate linguistic "needs".

This article provides an overview of the Personas Project conducted in Vietnam, highlighting a relatively simple

research methodology that has provided useful data for teachers and managers and how this has been utilised in the Teaching Centres.

### Project Objectives

The goal of the project was:

*To identify the persona of the ideal English language teacher of adult learners in Vietnam, as perceived by Vietnamese adult learners themselves,*

It was considered necessary to get a deeper understanding of the needs and expectations of Vietnamese students in order to:

- inform British Council Vietnam teachers about what students want and expect in terms of behaviour, and lesson and activity types;
- help teachers adapt courses to better meet their students' needs ;
- give teachers new to Vietnam background information about the local learning context;
- find out more about the local cultural context in which we teach;
- give valuable insights to managers about customer "wants";
- inform and influence the INSETT [in-service teacher training] programme.

The project team consisted of Tim Moore, Daniel Cornelius and Andy Jackson.

### Teacher Personas

'Personas' is a marketing technique that constructs profiles of typical customers. This is done by using a structured focus group often used in business to get participants to tell stories, called an 'anecdote circle' (Shutler 2011). From those stories the researcher / interlocutor can build up recurring themes that come from the storytellers. In this case anecdote circles were used to explore in detail students' learning preferences and what, in their eyes, are the qualities of an ideal teacher, using a number of common classroom schema activation techniques, such as brainstorming keywords to describe their favourite teacher or visualizing the teacher who had had the greatest impact on their language learning, before describing them to the small group with the researcher eliciting further details to build a clear picture of the "ideal teacher" being described. The circles revolved around two questions: "What is your ideal teacher like?" and "How do you like to learn?". For more information on anecdote circles, see Shutler 2011, From anecdote circle interactions, participants' comments are translated, analysed, and then synthesised into generic quotes. A survey including these quotes is then distributed to a wider population (in this case, a wider population of adult learners). In the Vietnam context, the survey findings were categorised according to prescribed British Council

teaching competencies (see below). A commentary was also written to explain the students' comments. During an INSETT workshop, British Council Vietnam teachers then collaborated to produce practical suggestions on how to address the findings when teaching.

### British Council Teaching Competencies

The British Council globally uses a set of prescribed teaching competencies as a performance management and recruitment tool for teachers (see Table 1). During this Personas project it was decided that many of the synthesised quotes from learners could be categorised according to four of these.

Table 1. British Council Teaching Competencies

Competency	Description
Classroom Management	The ability to plan, control and facilitate interaction in the classroom that is appropriate to the activity, promotes learning and takes into account different needs and abilities of learners and demonstrates an awareness of [Equal Opportunities and Diversity]
Course and Lesson Planning	The ability to prepare courses and individual lessons that fulfill course needs, employ appropriate methodology and meet learners' needs. In addition, lessons demonstrate cultural awareness and reflect the diversity of the host country and the UK
Subject Knowledge	This refers to the ability to analyse and describe language systems (lexis, discourse, grammar and phonology) and language use (through spoken and written text) and the ability to communicate this knowledge effectively and in ways appropriate to the learners
Understanding Your Learners	This refers to the understanding that a teacher demonstrates towards their learners and the learning process
Learning Technologies*	The ability to integrate learning technologies into everyday classroom practice and enhance language learning

\* This competency was not referred to by any participants in the project and so was not incorporated

### British Council Vietnam Market Research Project 2010

In addition to the Vietnam Personas Project, the British Council Vietnam commissioned a full market research project, the first time such a project had been conducted in Vietnam.

The results of this Market Research Project were triangulated with the data from the Personas Project to produce the following personas of the ideal English language teacher of adult learners in Vietnam.

English language teachers in Vietnam should:

- Be experienced and well qualified
- Be enthusiastic and friendly and know how to motivate students. 'Friendly' refers to being able to connect to all students in class and to use classroom activities which foster a fun study environment
- Be dedicated, which means understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each student and providing constructive and open feedback frequently
- Have a good understanding of, and be well adapted to, Vietnamese culture
- Provide, encourage and enforce an English speaking environment
- Set up and manage a classroom environment that is active, where all students are eager to learn
- Motivate and help students to be confident in using English
- Teach courses that incorporate a range of skills lessons, with a particular focus on developing speaking and listening skills
- Be able to supplement and adapt the course book appropriately to the needs of the learners, incorporating a variety of activities suitable for the age group being taught
- Teach in a way that is easy to understand through planning, signposting and executing lessons that are logical and meet the needs of learners.

As experienced practitioners in the Vietnamese context, the project team had no great surprises when the findings were synthesized. They reminded us of changes we had implemented based on observation and self-reflection in our early days in Vietnam, including ensuring the purpose of each activity was clear to all learners through signposting and post-activity reflection (in particular "games"), strong classroom management, linguistic knowledge and an interest and knowledge of the culture, key factors in gaining the trust of the learners.

## Project Outcomes

To date, the findings from this project have:

- Formed the basis of INSETT for teachers conducted in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) and Hanoi, to raise awareness of the purpose and findings of the research
- Been incorporated into the induction programmes of both British Council Teaching Centres with the findings disseminated to new teachers in the HCMC centre in August 2010.

For the future, it is planned that the findings from this project will:

- Be incorporated into learning plans by teachers in both centres, with at least one learning point for each teacher focusing on addressing areas an area or areas highlighted by the research, or conducting further research into some of the findings
- Provide the basis of future INSETT in both HCMC and Hanoi

## Future Research

The anecdote circles research methodology could be used for future projects to build Personas for teachers across a variety of course types and teaching contexts.

- IELTS Teacher Personas
- Primary Young Learner Teacher Personas
- Secondary Young Learner Teacher Personas
- Young Adult Teacher Personas

To move away from a “one size fits all approach”, the Personas methodology could be further used to outline a teaching approach that best fits with the context, and which exceeds learner expectations but also adheres to sound pedagogical principles.

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# In-service CLIL Teachers’ Continuous Professional Development: Reflections from the Field of an Evaluative Research Study

**Sandra Lucietto**  
(Free University of Bolzano, Italy)

## Introduction

In 2007-2009 I carried out an evaluative PhD study of a CLIL programme launched by the local education authority (LEA) in Trento, Italy. I have reported on the study itself elsewhere (e.g. Lucietto 2011), but in this article I wish to reflect on some lessons I learned regarding the role of the researcher engaging in evaluation of an innovation with teachers as participants. Specifically, I want to discuss the way I changed my approach to classroom observation in response to the teachers’ needs for guidance and reassurance. While maintaining the originally planned research procedures, I feel that I was able to enhance teachers’ development via ‘reflection-on-action’ (Schön, 1987), which in turn may have improved willingness to change in line with the planned innovation. Through researcher—practitioner professional dialogue a bridge was built between research and professional development, leading in some instances to higher teacher effectiveness.

The still ongoing CLIL Programme under investigation entails teaching 30% of the primary curriculum (6-11) through English or German. Fifteen schools were involved in the Programme in 2009. Fifty-three classes, i.e. all the CLIL classes in 14 of the 15 schools, were observed from November 2008 to May 2009. Nine classes were observed twice each, making a total of 62 observations.

## The CLIL teachers

The 31 CLIL teachers were a highly heterogeneous group of foreign language (FL) teachers: they differed by position (permanent/non-permanent), language taught, subject/s taught, gender, age, and nationality. Experience and background were also disparate: from qualified experienced Italian primary FL teachers to freelance native FL teachers to adults, to non-qualified bilinguals, to non-qualified natives, to non qualified non-

natives who could speak the required FL “well enough” (B1-B2 levels of the CEFR). Most members of the last three subgroups were having their first experience of teaching.

## Research methodology

Classroom observation had been planned to answer the research question: *To what extent are the CLIL pedagogical guidelines given by the Programme Scientific Supervisor implemented by CLIL teachers?*

The research methodology was inspired by Hopkins (1989) and Mortari (2003) amongst others. Hopkins states that

“evaluation needs to be linked to development. Educational evaluation has utility only in so far as its outcomes enable LEA officers, heads and teachers to improve the substance of their educational programmes and the quality of the teaching learning process. [...] [A]n evaluation can provide a means for translating an educational idea into practice as well as monitoring and enhancing curriculum development” (1989:3).

Mortari (2003:128) also believes that all “pedagogical research must be grounded in experience and must provide knowledge useful to practice”. To this aim,

“conceiving educational research as [...] research committed to provide data that facilitates decision-making in the world of education practitioners is not diminishing its value but helping it reconstruct its true sense”.

Mortari advocates a shift

“from a model of research separated from practice, where academics unilaterally inform practitioners at the end of their research study, to a joint construction of knowledge which requires sharing every step of the research project” (2003:128, my translation).

Interpreting these principles, I chose a tripartite design structure for the classroom observation phase of my overall evaluative study (Lucietto, 2010):

1. A preliminary meeting with CLIL teachers in each school (aim: to enable teachers to understand the rationale and meaning of the evaluation process whilst introducing research aims and tools);

2. Classroom observation of one lesson per class (with video-recording), the choice of lesson to be negotiated with the teacher

3. A feedback session after each observed lesson (aim: to gain data on teachers’ perceptions of the lesson, focusing on prominent features and key choices).

## Opening professional dialogue: discoveries and changes

In the preliminary meetings (PMs), the way I illustrated possible developmental purposes of classroom observation (alongside its more widely-known judgmental use) established positive relationships, as teachers had, in the words of one participant, “dreaded an inspection”. The PMs became significant data collection opportunities as well. The CLIL teachers worked in a team with subject teachers, who were usually present in class during CLIL lessons; although teams were to jointly plan lessons, agreeing on approaches, activities and materials, it became apparent that they had been given no CLIL pedagogical / methodological guidelines other than “do what you’ve always done, only change the language” (this was later confirmed in my interview with the Programme Scientific Supervisor). No previous school visits or classroom observations had been arranged, and although the LEA organized non-compulsory training sessions carried out by senior CLIL Programme staff who had no experience as teacher trainers, the CLIL teaching teams on the ground considered these highly ineffective (a perception I later triangulated through questionnaires). One sentence recurred: “We’ve been left alone”. Indeed, some teachers asked me for help.

Being so openly prompted by some participants, and guided by an ecological research paradigm (Mortari 2007) informed by complexity theory (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:33-34), which invites the researcher to focus on “emergence” from the field, I decided to enhance the ‘consultancy’ element in my work, while maintaining the tripartite structure of the observation phase in my research. I also changed my observation aim from seeing whether given guidelines were being adhered to seeing what emerged from actual teaching; observation was carried out with an open mind, focusing on capturing the individuality of each observed lesson (from teacher-learner relationship to underlying pedagogical approaches). Whilst I clarified that my support was given within the scope and boundaries of the evaluative research I was supposed to carry out, and that I did not seek to take on a position of supervisor, the post-observation feedback session became more like a structured *post-observation conference* (Bailey, 2006:140-41), where some aspects of the lesson were

Table 2. Post-Observation Conference structure (Lucietto, 2010: 165)

Methodology for post-observation feedback sessions (mentoring)	
1. Introduction	<p><b>The CLIL Teacher</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes class composition and issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>total no. of pupils; M/F; absent pupils</li> <li>immigrant pupils</li> <li>SEN pupils (all denominations)</li> </ul> </li> <li>“unveils” the lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>subject</li> <li>topic</li> <li>objectives</li> <li>activities and their aims</li> <li>how the lesson fits in a sequence: intro. lesson, development, remedial work, revision, in-depth exploration...</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
2. Body	<p><b>Phase 1</b></p> <p>Prompted by the observer/researcher, <b>The CLIL Teacher</b> expresses her point of view on the lesson (strong/weak points; own feelings)</p>
	<p><b>Phase 2</b></p> <p><b>The observer/researcher</b> highlights effective elements in the lesson. Aims: supporting Teacher (T) self-esteem, lowering the anxiety inherent in being observed, enabling T to be receptive in phase 3 (aspects that could/might be improved)</p>
	<p><b>Phase 3</b></p> <p>Using stimulated recall, and respecting the individual stage of professional development, <b>the observer/researcher and the CLIL T</b> engage in professional dialogue, focusing on teaching points the T might want to work on, and exploring how else they might be dealt with. Only if the T cannot see any alternatives, does the observer/researcher give <i>options</i> to choose from. The observer/researcher does not highlight all the points worth of attention, but chooses two/three key aspects. Aim: not overwhelming the T, at the risk of her losing motivation</p>
3. Conclusion	<p><b>CLIL T and observer /researcher</b> thank each other for the opportunity for learning from each other</p>

highlighted through *stimulated recall* (Bailey and Nunan, 1996:12) to enhance reflection-on-action (Schön, 1987), promote positive change and facilitate future reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983) as well, of course, as to provide data for my research study.

### Continuing professional dialogue: facilitating change

In the post-observation conference the observed teams and I were therefore involved in a constructive mentoring-like process based on professional dialogue and reflection upon actual practice, rather than the teaching teams being judged against pre-set criteria. The form these conferences ended up taking is represented in Table 2:

Whilst succeeding in highlighting and tackling some issues arising in practice, this empowering procedure was extremely useful for the investigation as well, as it allowed data collection and understanding of practice in an unbiased, supportive environment. The dialogue encouraged teachers to learn, and sometimes change improvable aspects of their lessons. Two examples: i) There was an accessibility issue regarding the visuals shown in class, which often were A6 cut-outs from teacher-made drawings where only the black-ink contours were visible. I had been collecting data of pupils leaning forward or coming out from behind their desks to see better, and discussed the point with some teachers. One day I entered one class where the teacher showed A4 and A3 vividly-coloured prints highly visible from the back. I congratulated her, and she answered “But it was your idea!”. The teachers had talked to each other and taken the point on board. ii) One teacher said

his pupils were “so eager to speak [he] could not stop them”. I asked if he had ever recorded their utterances. I invited him to note down their words when he heard something he wanted to keep as evidence of learning. When I visited again some weeks later, he showed me the whole of the class door and the adjoining wall covered in blue cardboard strips containing a child sentence each. Not only had he taken my suggestion seriously, but he had transformed it into an even greater motivation to speak.

### Future research, further dialogues?

The form of classroom observation methodology I have described could be considered a bridge-building tool between research and CPD. It highly contributed to both research data collection and teaching improvement as well as to the development of positive professional relationships. As an empowering tool for CPD as well as an effective research procedure, it could be adapted and used in similar other evaluative studies where the support for a particular innovation is perceived as insufficient by school and/or teacher.

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## **IATEFL SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)**

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- Each Special Interest Group aims to organise up to three events in the UK or outside the UK per year. These events frequently include the most informed and stimulating speakers in the field.
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## Conference Reports

*This is another new column we hope to make a regular feature. If you attend a conference that you think could be usefully reviewed for other Research SIG members, please consider submitting a report (of up to around 1,000 words). We encourage you to reflect on what you personally gained from the conference as well as reporting on what speakers said. In this issue we have two reports – the first on a conference in Poland that the SIG supported, the proceedings of which make up issue 27 of the newsletter. The second report, by Larysa Sanotska, relates to a BALEAP research training event she attended in June. In 2011 the SIG began to offer scholarships to members to attend selected research method training events, the only requirement being to write a report of the event in question – Larysa’s report is our first of this kind.*

## Classroom-Oriented Research Conference in Poland<sup>1</sup>

**Jennifer Schumm and Sarah Mercer**

In October 2011, the Research SIG supported a conference held in cooperation with the Adam Mickiewicz University in Kalisz, the State School of Higher Professional Education in Konin, and the University of Lodz. The aim of the conference was to bring together researchers in language learning from across the globe in order for them to share their findings and discuss the ‘achievements and challenges’ of doing classroom-oriented research.

The conference was well attended by over 80 participants from all over the world and there was a tightly packed schedule with an amazing six plenary speeches in only three days. It would be impossible to do justice to the broad range of excellent presentations that were given in these few days, so we will concentrate in our report on the plenary speeches which provided us with much food for thought – both in our capacities as researchers and practising language teachers. More information on some of the talks will appear in a special issue of the Research SIG newsletter due out in early 2012.

<sup>1</sup> An adapted version of this report first appeared in *ELT News* (Autumn 2011).

The first day of the conference was opened with a plenary from one of the leading scholars in the field, who needs little introduction: Prof. Diane Larsen-Freeman from the University of Michigan. She gave an extremely interesting talk about the causes of the ‘inert knowledge problem’ in which learners can use language in the classroom but cannot transfer it to other communicative contexts. A lecture by Prof. Paul Meara from the University of Swansea was the second plenary on the first day. In his talk, he described his experiences of testing lexical items and showed how computer programmes can be used to this effect to evaluate proficiency.

The second day of the conference opened with a plenary speech by Prof. Michael Sharwood-Smith from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh whose talk reflected on how we can enhance language input to increase the chance of it being taken up by learners. His talk was then followed by a lecture held by Prof. Simon Borg from the University of Leeds. He reported on an international research project which seeks to understand the ways in which teachers engage with research.

The final day commenced with a plenary given by Prof. David Singleton of Trinity College, Dublin. His lecture focused on a discussion of the maturational factor and critical hypothesis theory. He discussed to what extent age plays a role in successful language learning and whether it is justified to begin educational programmes for foreign languages at an early age. In the final plenary of the conference, a leading local Polish scholar, Prof. Pawel Scheffler, spoke in support of the use of translation in foreign language teaching. He illustrated how translation has been neglected in recent methodological developments and then showed how it is still of relevance in the contemporary language classroom.

In terms of social events, the conference also had a packed programme. The first day came to a close with a chance for all the participants to mingle socially at a reception followed by an impressive piano concert by the Kalisz philharmonic orchestra and Valery Afanasiev. The second day of the conference ended with a walking tour around the beautiful old town of Kalisz and an introduction to its enchanting architecture. All the participants then went on to a restaurant for a delightful meal and once again the evening provided an excellent opportunity for participants to get to know each other and learn about their various work contexts, teaching projects, research undertakings and cultural backgrounds.

All in all, we left the conference with a rich series of impressions and inspirations. Not only did we gain ideas for research approaches but we were also prompted to reflect on a wide range of dimensions of our language teaching such as the use of literature to

promote intercultural competency, ways of using technology to enhance our teaching, our use of language as teachers in terms of structures, interactional patterns and question forms, alternative approaches to assessment, considerations in CLIL approaches, the interaction between learning styles and strategies as well as various psychological dimensions of the learning-teaching interaction such as teacher and learner motivations, beliefs and affect. In general, the conference offered participants a broad blend of intellectual debate and discussion as well as a wonderful chance to interact and socialise with colleagues from a range of educational settings.

## Qualitative and Quantitative Methods for Research in EAP

*Reflections of a teacher attending the BALEAP ResTES event 'Methodologies for Researching EAP Contexts, Practices and Pedagogies', June 2011.*

**Larysa Sanotska**

### Self-introduction

I am a lecturer in the English Philology Department of Lviv National Ivan Franko University in Ukraine. I teach Bachelor and Master students who major in TEFL. I am currently teaching an experimental Academic Writing course to a group of English Philology students and doing research in the sphere of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), with a specific focus on Academic Writing.

In June 2011, as a member of the IATEFL Research SIG (ReSIG), I applied for and was awarded the first ever ReSIG scholarship for event participation – to attend the 'Methodologies for Researching EAP Contexts, Practices and Pedagogies' one-day mini-conference at Leicester University, UK. The 24 June mini-conference was dedicated to practices and pedagogies of research in EAP and was organized by the Research and Publications Sub-Committee of the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP), an association with which ReSIG has been developing friendly ties.

I wanted to attend the event for two reasons: firstly, to ascertain that I have been using reliable methods in my research; secondly, to learn what other researchers have been doing and how they do it. I was extremely

happy to gain financial support from the IATEFL ReSIG because it would have been impossible for me to attend the event without it.

### About the organizers of the event

BALEAP was founded in 1972 and since that time has supported the professional development of English language teachers working with international students in higher educational institutions in the UK and beyond. The Association promotes research through biennial conferences and one-day meetings. The BALEAP Research Training Event Series (ResTES) creates opportunities for practitioners and researchers to share their experience of different aspects of the process of research at mini-conferences (ResTES events) of the type I attended.

### Overview of the mini-conference

The conference programme was divided into two blocks: key-note presentations and researchers' / practitioners' 'work-in-progress' reports.

The key-note speakers were Dr Diana Ridley (Sheffield Hallam University) and Kyla Steenhardt (Associate Director of Higher Education at Opinion Panel, which is an independent research business set up to represent the views of students and young people). Dr Ridley compared qualitative and quantitative research methods, presented different data collection methods and criteria, described general approaches to sampling, offered a short panorama of interview types and techniques and suggested a successful way of presenting outcomes of qualitative analysis. Kyla Steenhardt's presentation dealt with defining quantitative research, and the issues which can be successfully explored by means of a quantitative approach.

A number of the 'work-in-progress' reports involved, from my point of view, unexpected research approaches, for example collecting data by means of listening to students' personal stories, or making notes on students' recollections of what they had been thinking about at a particular moment in the past. Zulfikar Qureshi (University of Central Lancashire) delivered a presentation dedicated to stimulated recall interviews as a means for exploring students' attitudes to the course, while Houda Olabi (University of Birmingham) reported on an analysis of the efficacy and relevance of EAP courses to Arab students. Both presenters provided short surveys of their research-in-progress.

Innovative tendencies in research were also demonstrated by Helen Bowstead (University of Plymouth), who explored the use of narratives in educational research and Julia Molinari (University of Nottingham) who reflected on the process, methods and validity of piloting an EAP test.

## How has attending the conference affected my own research?

My own research deals with developing techniques for minimizing the influence of Ukrainian/Russian academic style in students' academic papers in English, and I have mostly obtained data by analyzing students' papers, observing students' performance and taking notes. I have also administered some questionnaires to get quantitative results. Throughout four semesters I observed that the students, in spite of successfully identifying the proper style peculiarities, have problems with writing in academic style. Their vocabulary, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and so on, are affected by the Ukrainian / Russian style of reporting research outcomes.

Obviously, qualitative and quantitative approaches can be constituents of any research work. Supposedly, applying both methods can guarantee a relatively valid outcome, or at least 'triangulation'. That is why the input sessions dedicated to these broad research approaches were especially interesting to me as a practicing teacher and researcher. I personally used to have more trust in figures. However, Dr Diana Ridley vividly demonstrated the utmost importance of interviewing students and providing citations from the interviews in research reports. The fact that, according to Dr Ridley, a small amount of students can be engaged in the qualitative research process seemed appropriate in my situation too, as the group I usually teach and observe consists of 10 to 18 students. Contrary to the general opinion that the more participants, the more trustworthy are the results, Dr Ridley asserted that even observing 4 people closely can be enough. Overall, according to Dr Ridley, if a researcher aims to analyse a multi-layered and complex reality, going deep into knowledge which is personally experienced can offer the possibility of an in-depth investigation of the subject in question. Thus, qualitative analysis can't be ignored. This is was the major contributor to change in my thinking as a result of the workshop.

And so, after the conference I explicitly planned a next stage for my research – collecting 'in-depth' information. I am intending to interview the students to learn about their strengths and weaknesses, reasons for success or failure, and so on. I will involve several participants and record the interviews in order to analyse and quote what the students said in my research report.

Much as I tend to like substantiating my research analyses with figures, in my current research I have had problems with collecting quantitative data. Kyla Steenhart, in her Quantitative Methodologies masterclass, showed how to structure research by identifying the stages of the project, and conducting 'conjoint analysis' by breaking the problem into

constituent parts. This information is likely to be helpful for researchers like me, those who want to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in their studies. However, quantitative analysis implies gathering answers from a large number of respondents, according to Kyla Steenhart, often – these days – by administering online questionnaires. Such research can be hampered by the reluctance of potential respondents to answer. Shall I consider motivating online respondents or make do with the respondents at hand? As quantitative data collected from a small number of participants can hardly be convincing, at this stage I decided to postpone quantitative analysis. In the long-term, however, I will continue to gather quantitative data by means of questionnaires, so that in several years I will have obtained sufficient data to analyse. According to Kyla Steenhart, qualitative research cannot be generalized, while quantitative research is statistically valid. Consequently, despite the lengthy period of time I will need for collecting sufficient quantitative data, the outcomes of my research will be more valid if I do combine quantitative with qualitative research methods.

## Conclusion

The BALEAP ResTes event, 'Methodologies for Researching EAP Contexts, Practices and Pedagogies', was a unique opportunity for me to familiarize myself with the context and research techniques applied in UK universities. Now, as a result of attending the event with ReSIG sponsorship, while conducting my own research I shall consider implementing various approaches to attain a fuller picture of the phenomenon I am investigating.

## Members' publications

*In this new column we offer Research SIG members the opportunity to highlight their own research-related publications (books, articles, and so on), either in a short article – ideally offering something more than the publication itself, for example the story of how you came to research or write it – or by means of an interview (which we could carry out with you or which you could arrange yourself). In this issue we begin the new series with an author-arranged conversation.,,*

# Mapping applied linguistics from the bottom-up: A conversation

**Chris Hall, Patrick Smith and Rachel Wicaksono**

*Applied linguistics (AL) is undergoing changes in its scope, both professionally and globally. Here, ReSIG members Chris Hall (C), Patrick Smith (P) and Rachel Wicaksono (R) - the authors of Mapping Applied Linguistics, published by Routledge in 2011, talk about how their book reflects on and aims to shape these changes. They discuss the contribution of technology to the changing landscape of AL, their 'mapping' metaphor, and the opportunities for students and practitioners to participate in a new, interactive website, [www.mapping.com](http://www.mapping.com). The video of an earlier chat between Rachel and Chris can be seen in full on this website; in the new piece below they have tidied up their recorded thoughts, and Patrick has joined the 'conversation'.*

**R:** Chris, where were you and what were you doing when you first thought about mapping applied linguistics?

**C:** Well, I was in Mexico with Patrick where we were colleagues at the University of the Americas in Cholula. The idea for the book came from our conversations and the teaching we were doing there – we had reshaped the MA programme in Second Language Teaching (English and Spanish) and broadened it to be more of an applied linguistics programme. Patrick's background is socio-cultural theory, his PhD was in language, reading and culture and he's worked a lot in literacy and bilingual education. My background is very

different, in theoretical linguistics and psycholinguistics, and we came together with other colleagues working in areas of applied linguistics including Mexican Sign Language, the maintenance of indigenous languages, literacy, bilingual education, English language teaching and other areas. Even though we had such different backgrounds, we were able to contribute to each others', and our students' development, and that's where the book really came from, the realisation that, by working together, we could enrich our students' learning experiences.

**R:** Where did the idea for the title, 'Mapping Applied Linguistics', come from?

**C:** It was Patrick's idea! There is a quote in the Preface that summarises why we chose the mapping metaphor:

to make maps is to organize oneself, to generate new connections and be able to transform the material and immaterial conditions in which we are immersed. It isn't the territory, but it definitely produces territory (Casas-Cortes and Cobarrubios, 2008, p. 62)

**P:** I'm not sure I can take credit for the title, because it really came out of our three-way discussions. As Chris mentioned, the synergy of working across disciplines and with colleagues and students from different parts of the world has resulted in new ways of thinking about applied linguistics, including the notion of mapping. For example, I remember reading and listening to Rachel's ideas about additional language teaching, discourse analysis, and learning technologies, and being struck by how richly they were informed by her experiences of teaching English and teacher training in Southeast Asia. At a time when the field of applied linguistics is quickly growing beyond its English-language origins and UK /US confines, mapping seems an apt metaphor.

**R:** So, you're talking about a new way of organising the discipline of applied linguistics; including thinking about the scope of the discipline, the relationship between linguistics and applied linguistics, the connections with other disciplines, and the production of a guide, or map, for students and practitioners of applied linguistics.

**P:** That's right, but always recognising that the map is never finished and also that the borders that we think are there are often not. In fact, one of our main ideas was that applied linguistics is about crossing borders, in so many senses.

**R:** Yes, and that tied in with our ideas about varieties of languages and the ways in which artificial (political) borders between languages can be used against speakers of those languages.

**C:** And, as we call them, 'clients' of applied linguistics, including, for example, English language learners who do not necessarily need the 'native speaker' model which is being delivered to them. So that was one of the major issues that informed our thinking and something we're still working on in our ongoing research.

**R:** So, challenging the idea of 'authentic' English being something that is to be found within the borders of England with the other Englishes beyond the borders being in need of 'correction'.

**C:** Yes. Of course, the other kinds of borders we were interested in breaking through were between the different disciplines. In the third section of the book, for example, we go beyond the traditional borders of applied linguistics as it has been narrowly conceived in the past and look at lexicography, translation, language pathology and forensic linguistics; areas which are not normally seen as within the territory of applied linguistics.

**P:** This is one of the most exciting aspects of the project, isn't it? The idea that applied linguistics can be a window on or point of entry into related disciplines, and a way of conceptualizing new knowledge gained by reading in other fields. I think that applied linguistics can also be seen as a kind of shield, an intellectual protective charm against misguided instruction. For me, the identity of 'applied linguist' is a potentially powerful one for any of us who have felt frustrated at times by the confines of a single discipline. It's also, hopefully, an economically advantageous one, given the collaboration that is increasingly expected of language professionals.

**R:** OK. One other point which we could make now was that when we were writing the book, Chris and I were in York, Patrick was in Texas and we had to find a way of writing collaboratively, so we got very interested in ways of using internet technology to work together.

**P:** Yes, co-authoring the book from our locations in different universities and countries showed us the advantages and potential of internet collaboration. We were able to hold our regular Skype sessions from laptops in different time zones, such as when Rachel was in Paris or travelling in China with Chris, or when he was stranded in Seville during the eruption of the volcano in Iceland in April 2010. At the same time, we experienced some of its limitations. This helped us envision, as we do in the final chapter, "Prospects and Perspectives", how these new language-related technologies are going to affect the lives of clients and the working lives of applied linguistics practitioners.

**C:** Yes, and we realised at the same time that technology is a way in which, increasingly, students and practitioners are being empowered to become active members of an international community of

applied linguists. One of the major principles that emerged out of the writing of the book was our shared philosophy, including trying to contribute to a more bottom-up, participatory, kind of applied linguistics, which includes all the players.

**R:** So, using some of this technology, we've developed a companion website, [www.mapping.com](http://www.mapping.com), in an attempt to create a community space in which practitioners from different areas of applied linguistics will be able to participate. Contributors to [mapping.com](http://mapping.com) will be able to tell other members of the community about their own experiences and opinions, as well as asking questions and sharing resources - building applied linguistics from the bottom up.

**P:** Yes and we've got examples of that in the final chapter of the book in which we introduce five practitioners from different areas of the world. The videos of our interviews with them on [mapping.com](http://mapping.com) would be good models for anyone who wants to contribute to the website.

**R:** So we hope that readers of the book will also get involved in the website and that this will be a new opportunity to participate in the creation of applied linguistics from the bottom up.

**P:** Another thing to mention is that in the Introduction of the book we focused on what we call the five main ingredients of applied linguistics. Chris, do you want to say something about these?

**C:** Well, the first main ingredient was the 'centrality of client needs'. Not everyone might like the choice of the word 'client', and we certainly don't mean to imply that there are market forces which drive the discipline, but we believe in the importance of starting with the problems that are experienced by the users of language, problems which applied linguists should aim to help them resolve. This is one way in which applied linguistics is different from theoretical linguistics.

**R:** Yes, and it's often not just actual but also perceived needs, including the perceptions of the people which surround the client, which is what can make our clients' language problems so complex.

**P:** The second ingredient is what we've called a 'pragmatic orientation', an idea which links to our mapping metaphor. We've already said that maps are not a neutral representation of the territory; they are inevitably a selection of the features of the territory which get noticed by the mapper. We are admitting that our representation of applied linguistics is also a selection of aspects of the disciplinary landscape, and stressing that it is important for us, and for other applied linguists, to be explicit about the assumptions that we/they are making about language and language users. But also to be prepared to select different

approaches to the solution of their clients' needs from a range of different social and cognitive/psychological positions.

**C:** Right. So the third central feature of applied linguistics as we see it, and which we thrashed out a number of times in the course of writing the book, is that language must be seen as both a sociocultural and a cognitive/psychological phenomenon and that, although these two approaches are often seen as incompatible, applied linguists ignore either one of them at their peril.

**R:** Yes. The fourth ingredient of applied linguistics is about role-shifting and collaboration and I think this goes back to what Chris said about where the idea of the book came from, at a time when he and Patrick were working with a diverse group of language professionals. My experience too is that my own language profession, the teaching of English as an additional language, requires teachers to know something about other areas of applied linguistics; for example, language pathology, in situations where a student has speech or hearing difficulties. We want to make the point that, while a language professional may have expertise in a particular area of the discipline, they can benefit from learning about the practices of language professionals working in other areas as well as from talking to and collaborating with them.

**C:** And ultimately, of course, we're all students aren't we?

**R:** Yes, necessarily!

**P:** Rachel, do you want to say something about the fifth ingredient of applied linguistics, 'mode of enquiry'?

**R:** OK. Well, the fifth ingredient bundles the first four together. What we're saying is that the sum of our first four ingredients adds up to a distinctive way of practising our profession, of seeing the world as a complex place which needs to be understood from both social/cultural and cognitive/psychological perspectives, where ideological positions are acknowledged but not seen as restricting us to particular ways of thinking/doing, and where language problems are best tackled collaboratively. So, the result of the first four ingredients is a way of being that is unique to applied linguistics.

**C:** Well, we hope that you enjoy reading the book and find it useful.

**R:** And that the process continues after you've finished reading the last page, and that you get involved in mapping.com.

**P:** Yes, we look forward to hearing your stories and reading your contributions on the website.

**C:** And interacting with you!

## References

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Contact: [resig@iatefl.org](mailto:resig@iatefl.org)

Website: [www.resig.org](http://www.resig.org)

## Links and Resources

Ana d'Almeida has been a stalwart of the Research SIG for many years, not only as 'electronic manager' with overall responsibility for our website [www.resig.iatefl.org](http://www.resig.iatefl.org) but also in providing a regular column for the newsletter called 'MyLinks'. Her twelfth in the series is below (all links have been tested and are working at the time of publication of this issue). MyLinks is followed by a list of books on ELT research methods synthesized from information shared in 2011 among members of our Yahoo!Group discussion list (join if you're not already a member!: go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/resig/> (non-members of IATEFL and the Research SIG are also welcome)).

## MyLinks

### Ana d'Almeida

In this twelfth column of MyLinks, we'll take a look at the exciting world of Translation. As we know, translation has always played a big role in the advancement of research in different knowledge fields, though its value for language learners is only slowly being recognised again. We hope you enjoy the links and resources in this edition!

▶ **FLOSS MANUAL: Open Translation Tools** is a comprehensive document on the issues and practicalities surrounding open translation. You can download it as a PDF or Pub file.

<http://en.flossmanuals.net/open-translation-tools/index/>

▶ **Translation Terminology** is a brief, yet handy, list of translation terms to get you up to speed with the world of translation.

<http://www.net-translators.com/knowledge-center/translation-terminology>

▶ **TAUS and the history of translation** is a short video on the history and importance of translation.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOIQ9OR2L0o&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOIQ9OR2L0o&feature=player_embedded)

▶ **Translation Journal** is a free online journal which offers several translation resources, articles, links, reviews, tools and lots more!

<http://translationjournal.net/journal/index.html>

▶ **eXchanges Journal of Literary Translation** offers interesting and creative experiments in the translation of texts from various languages.

<http://exchanges.uiowa.edu/splash/>

▶ **Google Translator Toolkit** is 'is a powerful and easy-to-use editor that helps translators work faster and better.'

<http://translate.google.com/support/toolkit/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=147809> for the basics

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7W2NJFdoIq> for a short video

▶ **Wordfast Anywhere** is a great online translation tool available to all translators for free, but which offers true confidentiality.

<http://www.wordfast.net/?whichpage=anywhere>

▶ **Ethnologue: Languages of the World** is 'an encyclopedic reference work cataloging all of the world's 6,909 known living languages.'

<http://www.ethnologue.com/web.asp>

If you have comments, a request for a topic or a link to suggest for this column, please do get in touch!:

[anacik@gmail.com](mailto:anacik@gmail.com)

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## Recommended reading: Research methods for English teachers

Compiled by **Ana d'Almeida** from members' suggestions:

In October 2011 'Glenski' at [glenahill@gmail.com](mailto:glenahill@gmail.com) posted a request on our Yahoo! Group for recommended books on methods for doing research as an English teacher. We've compiled the following list of suggestions members sent in, for our collective reference, and we have also made them available as a 'Google doc' which anyone can update very easily at any time. Shortened link: <http://bit.ly/s0ZYDD> Please do edit this if you have a new contribution or spot any inaccuracies

## Articles and Books

Allwright, R. L. (2003) Exploratory practice: Rethinking practitioner research in language teaching. *Language Teaching Research*, 7, 113-141.

Bell J (1999) *Doing your Research Project: A Guide to First Time Researches in Education and Social Science*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Burns, A. (2011). Action research in the field of second language teaching and learning. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 237-253). Vol. II. New York: Routledge.

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Mackey, Alison and Susan M. Glass (2005) *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design*. London: Routledge. See google.com/books (shortened link: <http://bit.ly/tLQCcP> )

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Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Nunan, D (1992) *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. google.com/books (shortened link: <http://bit.ly/u6jdwT>)

Radnor, H. (2001) *Researching your Professional Practice Doing Interpretative Research*. Buckingham: Oxford University Press.

Richards, K. 2003 *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wilkinson, D (2000). *The Researcher's Toolkit*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

There was also a recommendation for the *Teaching and Researching ...* series published by Pearson Education, e.g.:

Grabe, W. & F. L. Stoller (2002). *Teaching and Researching Reading*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

## Weblinks

Here are some further references, specifically for action research:

ActionResearch.net

<http://www.actionresearch.net/>

Action Research in Education - University of Plymouth

<http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/actionresearch/arhome.htm>

Jean McNiff website

<http://www.jeanmcniff.com/ar-booklet.asp>

Resource papers in AR

<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/books.html>

Center for Collaborative Action Research | Pepperdine University

<http://cadres.pepperdine.edu/ccar/>

## Acknowledgements

Our thanks to the following Yahoo! Group members for their contributions:

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# Grants for research

## Writing a good proposal

*Interested in small-scale classroom research? Want to win a scholarship to attend an IATEFL conference? Why not apply for the (IATEFL) International House John Haycraft Classroom Exploration Scholarship? **Jane Willis** explains what you need to do to be in with a chance.*

### Scholarship aims and time-scale

The aim of this scholarship is to encourage practising teachers to embark on or to continue small-scale classroom exploration projects in order to shed light on aspects of the classroom language learning experience.

You may decide to undertake a research project specifically to enable you to apply for an award. You can also enter projects already under way or projects planned for the next academic year. However projects already completed will not be accepted.

The idea is that scholarship winners will present their projects and results at the following year's IATEFL conference. The June deadline for the submission of your scholarship application (in the form of a research outline) allows you time to finalise your project design and submit your talk proposal by the IATEFL conference September deadline. During the next six months, you will work on your research and prepare your report.

### How the scholarship got started

In 2006, Corony Edwards and I won a British Council ELT Innovation award for our book *Teachers Exploring Tasks in English Language Teaching*, a collection of short papers written by teachers, for teachers, describing a wide range of small research projects investigating – using various methods – what actually happens when tasks are used in class. Around twenty teachers from different teaching contexts and levels contributed, and the Innovation Award judges felt that their research methods and findings would inspire and enable many teachers to explore the interaction in their classrooms in a similar way.

Corony and I recognised that the work was not ours alone. It had been done by a significant number of classroom teacher-researchers. And we know from our contact with teachers and with our MA students that there are lots of teachers out there doing similarly

valuable work. So we decided to donate the prize money to finance a scholarship to the IATEFL Exeter Conference in 2008 to encourage further classroom research. The following year, International House kindly stepped in to 'adopt' this scholarship and there are now two scholarships awarded annually. The scholarship is named in memory of the founder of International House, John Haycraft.

### The selection criteria for the award

Applicants are asked to submit a research outline and rationale of between 400 and 500 words. If you decide to apply – and we hope you will – you need to make sure that your submission will satisfy **all** the criteria listed below:

1. The project should be small-scale and classroom based.
2. The research topic should be suitable for its social and educational context.
3. The objectives of the research should be clearly defined and achievable.
4. The procedures used for data collection and analysis should be clear
5. The work should be original/ innovative in some way.
6. The process and/ or outcomes should be useful to other teachers/ trainers.

The first thing to remember is that your project must include some genuine research, not just consist of a new course plan or new materials, resources or techniques or other innovation – no matter how successful. You need to carry out some classroom exploration – some research to find out what actually happens when you implement it/them. Ideally your research will relate to a question you want to explore as you carry out your project. No matter how excellent the innovation, (and there have been some brilliant ideas submitted in the past years) if the research element is missing, it won't gain this award. Remember that other kinds of IATEFL scholarship exist, one of which may be more suitable for your project than this one!

You will probably begin your submission by briefly describing your context and your innovation, but then you will need to give the rationale and the research question or puzzle that you want to shed light on. Follow this with a short account of how you are going to explore / investigate what actually happens during (and possibly after) its implementation. These research procedures, including the methods used to collect the data that you need in order to answer your research question, need to be clearly outlined.

## So what kind of research?

The project needs to be small-scale and your goals achievable. It is more likely to involve qualitative or descriptive research based on one or two classrooms, (as is generally the case with Action Research or Exploratory Practice – see references at end), than quantitative involving ‘experimental’ groups and control groups, which by their very nature often need to become large-scale for the results to be of general use. The aim is for you as teacher to gain a deeper understanding of the processes of teaching and learning in your own classroom. If you do want to tackle some quantitative research, be aware that it is often difficult to control all variables adequately, and also that the variables you control in your classes may not be appropriate or even valid in other teaching situations.

## A good submission typically includes:

- An informative title;
- A brief description of your teaching context and/or a background to the research area;
- A specific research question, stating what you want to explore, and why, with a brief rationale, possibly relating this to previous observations or theories. For example, former scholarship winner Daniela Callegari from Italy, who had been exploring the effects of cooperative learning on oral skills in EFL classes, formulated her new research question as follows: ‘What kinds of tasks would be most effective to promote oral competences in a monolingual Italian class of 9 year- old children?’;
- An action plan with an approximate timescale,
- Details of the research process – e.g. data collection methods and how data will be analysed;
- What you hope to end up with, e.g. ‘By the end of my research I’d like to have ...’;
- The reasons why your research might be of interest to other teachers.

## Other tips

- Give your project a title that reflects its content area and main focus;
- Use sub-headings and bullet points e.g. when outlining an action plan or listing data collection procedures;
- Keep within the word limit. If your submission is over 500 words it will not be considered;
- Get a colleague to read the list of criteria and then comment on your submission;
- Finally – don’t worry if your research does not run smoothly or progress according to your expectations. It may still be useful to others and well worth reporting.

## A personal footnote

As judges, (and we are usually a panel of four, from diverse ELT backgrounds), we were delighted with the wide range of topics and ideas offered last year. The

submissions made really interesting reading – many quite inspiring.

We hope that this year you will look for something interesting to explore in your classroom. We look forward to hearing about it. Hopefully we will see you at the next IATEFL conference or read about your project in the Research SIG newsletter or IATEFL *Voices*.

## References

Burns, A. 2009 *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners* Routledge.

Edwards, C. and J. Willis (eds) 2005. *Teachers Exploring Tasks in ELT*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

For more on Exploratory Practice see [http://www.prodait.org/resources/exploratory\\_practicing.pdf](http://www.prodait.org/resources/exploratory_practicing.pdf)

## IATEFL Scholarships

The John Haycraft International House Classroom Research scholarship is offered every year, with a deadline (usually) in June. All IATEFL members are alerted annually to this opportunity via the IATEFL e-bulletin, and Research SIG will send out details also when the next round of applications is open. See also:

<http://www.iatefl.org/information/scholarships>

Research SIG offers its own scholarships of £250 to attend selected research methods events, in particular events organized by the SIG (see the back inside cover for an announcement of our next event – an action research workshop with Anne Burns); see also:

<http://resig.weebly.com/scholarships.html>

# Winning proposals

*Congratulations to Research SIG member Ana Inés Salvi and to Sandy Millin for winning the two (IATEFL) International House John Haycraft Classroom Exploration Scholarships awarded for 2011-12. Here (with their permission) are the texts of Ana's and Sandy's full winning proposals, followed by links to the reports of their research which they ended up giving at the 2012 IATEFL Conference in Glasgow.*

*If you need to or want to write a classroom research proposal of your own it might be useful for you to compare Ana's and Sandy's winning proposals below with the criteria and advice Jane Willis has given us in her article above.*

## Winning proposal (1): Getting Students to Use Internet Resources

### Sandy Millin

For the last year I have been using Edmodo.com (an interface designed for education and similar to facebook) to share materials, online activities and other links with students to extend work done in class. However, based on a survey I did at the end of the academic year only about half of the students have taken advantage of these materials. I would therefore like to investigate the following two questions, with the aim of encouraging more of my students to exploit the wealth of materials available on the internet:

- What factors help or hinder students' uptake and continued use of online materials to aid their English learning outside the classroom?
- What can teachers do in class to encourage students to take advantage of available materials and help them to overcome any obstacles?

For the purpose of this research 'online materials' are "anything freely available on the internet which could help students improve their English skills or systems." Examples include, among others, voice recorders, concordancers, cultural information and grammar explanations and exercises.

At the end of the research I would like to have:

- a list of characteristics displayed by students who regularly use online materials to further their study;
- a corresponding list for students who are more reluctant to use online materials;
- a summary of the type of online materials which students find most useful;

- ideas for teachers to use in class to encourage reluctant students to begin to exploit online materials.

In order to reach these objectives, I will:

- Ask a new group to complete an initial questionnaire detailing their study habits, including questions about their use of and access to online materials and what materials they already use.
- Interview a selection of students based on the questionnaire, covering both those who do and do not use online materials to discover what factors influence their uptake of these resources.
- Provide links to online materials to the students throughout the course. Base the choice of which links to share on a learning styles analysis, coupled with the work done in lessons. Ask students to provide a star rating (1-5) for each link to assess which are the most useful.
- Ask a selection of students to keep a week-long log of the online and offline materials they use outside class.
- Assess students' responses to online materials based on interaction in the online environment (such as replies to a link posted on Edmodo) and discussions we have during lessons.
- Administer two further surveys at the mid- and endpoints of the course to find out whether students' use of the available materials has changed.
- Experiment in the classroom to encourage reluctant students to use online materials during the course, noting which activities students best respond to.

I hope this research will be of interest to teachers who want to encourage their students to make the most of materials available on the internet.

## Winning proposal (2): Combining autonomy-oriented pedagogy and practitioner research via Exploratory Practice

**Ana Inés Salvi**

During classes on the MA in ELT which I am currently undertaking part-time I came across the ideas of Learner Autonomy (Holec, 1981; Dam, 1995) and Exploratory Practice. Although these concepts were new to me, I could immediately identify elements of both of them in some of my past teaching experiences which had been particularly successful. This discovery prompted me to explore my previous and current teaching practice further, through discussion with colleagues and tutors on the MA programme, through related reading, and through reflective writing in a teaching journal.

I discovered through this process that enabling learners to take a greater degree of control over their classroom learning may have been the main reason why some of my classes had been particularly successful, at least from my point of view, in the past. I also realized that Exploratory Practice, as promoted by Dick Allwright, could be a very appropriate way to understand better the nature of the kind of autonomy-oriented teaching approach I had engaged in and now wish to engage in further, with a view also to disseminating the lessons to be learnt more widely. Particularly in its more recent manifestation (Allwright and Hanks, 2009), issues or puzzles generated by students are central in Exploratory Practice, and this seems to tie in very well with the demands of a learner-centred, indeed autonomy-oriented approach.

My proposed research project is aimed at exploring the impact a learner-centred pedagogy can have on language learners' development, and gaining insights into the feasibility of incorporating the principles of Learner Autonomy and Exploratory Practice into my practice in two very different contexts, namely, a five-week summer school course for teenagers with a School of English in London in July/August 2011, and a five-week EAP university course for graduate students at a university in August/September 2011. Specifically, I will offer learners in both contexts choices regarding objectives, materials, tasks and forms of evaluation; I will promote group work; and I will encourage learners to explore their own puzzles about their learning lives.

Throughout, I will record my observations self-critically in a teaching journal, carry out focus group interviews with learners outside class, and end each course with a comprehensive questionnaire to access students' own perspectives on the experience. My final report will make use of all this data, and will be based on themes

which emerge from a content analysis in relation to the overall aims (above).

I expect this classroom research project to be useful not only to the participants (myself and the students) concerned but also to other teachers, encouraging them to try out comparable ideas in other contexts like primary or secondary schools. Indeed, my intention is to continue this research when I return to Argentina, in the belief that Learner Autonomy and Exploratory Practice are likely to be well-matched to resource-poor settings like state schools in Argentina where learners' motivation needs to be seriously rekindled.

### References

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- Dam, L. 1995. *Learner Autonomy: From Theory to Classroom Practice*. Ireland: Authentik.
- Holec, H. 1981. *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.

## Winning entry presentations

You can access both Ana's video-recorded conference presentation and Sandy's blog post and video-recorded version of her conference presentation in the new Teacher-Research section of our website at <http://resig.weebly.com/teacher-research.html>.

This section of the website showcases practitioner research conducted by language teachers and teacher educators. We are aiming to encourage sharing of experience through presentations in a wide variety of conventional and innovative formats such as video-recorded conference presentations, podcast versions of conference presentations, newsletter articles, more formal reports, and so on. You can also raise and discuss any issues you like in connection with ELT teacher-research.

## International House John Haycraft Classroom Exploration Scholarship winners!



Left to right: 2011 John Haycraft Classroom Exploration Scholarship winners Sandy Millin and Ana Inés Salvi with Chair of the IATEFL Scholarships Committee Eryl Griffiths and original co-founder of the scholarship, Jane Willis. The photo was taken after Ana's talk at the 2012 IATEFL conference in Liverpool.

## Announcement: 3 November 2012 Workshop on Action Research, led by Anne Burns



We are very glad to announce that Professor Anne Burns, author of *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners* (Routledge, 2010), will be facilitating this Saturday workshop. The workshop, organized by ReSIG, will take place at the University of Reading, UK. Further details here:

<http://resig.weebly.com/events.html>

Booking is now open. If you wish to attend, please book online via the above URL.

Early-bird (cheaper rate) booking ends on **1st October**. Non-members as well as members of IATEFL are very welcome to take part in the event, though the fee is cheaper for ReSIG members.

There is a scholarship opportunity for IATEFL Research SIG members wishing to attend the workshop. Details here:

<http://resig.weebly.com/scholarships.html>

The deadline for applications for the scholarship (open to ReSIG members only) is **24th October**.

## MA in Teaching English to Young Learners

### By Distance

The Department of Education at The University of York, UK, have been delivering this award-winning Masters programme for 16 years. We now deliver this distance learning Masters programme in several countries and online.

This two-year, part-time programme has several starting dates each year: October (online), December (Singapore), March (online), July (Norway) and August (Switzerland).

The MA in TEYL comprises 2 intensive face-to-face or online modules (one at the start of each study year) plus 8 multimedia, self-study modules. Emphasis within the modules is on the linking of theory and practice, making extensive use of material from authentic young learner classes.

Modules are highly structured, with detailed and directed study, supported by an online virtual learning environment. Throughout the programme, students have continuous guidance and support from a dedicated supervisor who is a TEYL specialist. Students are expected to study for 13-18 hours per week and each module is assessed by way of a written assignment. The final assignment is a report on Action Research carried out by the student.

Upon successful completion of the programme, students will be awarded a Masters qualification and all graduating students of the programme are invited to the graduation ceremony at The University of York.

There is an annual tuition fee for each year of study on the programme. The tuition fee for the first year of study, commencing July 2012 —July 2013, is £5,090.00. The fee for the second year of study is usually subject to an increase.

For further information please visit our website at [www.york.ac.uk/teyl](http://www.york.ac.uk/teyl).

Enquiries can be sent to the MA in TEYL administrator at [educ12@york.ac.uk](mailto:educ12@york.ac.uk).

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