# ELT RESEARCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IATEFL RESEARCH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

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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: http://resig.iatefl.org (in the section titled 'Join us').

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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. Please visit the SIG website (resig.iatefl.org) for author guidelines (under 'Publications').

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## Editing and layout

This issue was edited by Ana Inés Salvi, Gosia Sky and Richard Smith.

# From the coordinator

**Dear RESEARCH SIG members,**

This pre-conference, spring issue of *ELT Research* gives me the opportunity to reflect on some of the discussion at last year's conference and to ask for your ideas and support for future activities. First, though, a few words about the upcoming April 2013 conference:

**IATEFL Conference in Liverpool, 8-12 April 2013**

The SIG's 'Open Forum' at the IATEFL annual conference is an important time for members to make their views known about SIG activities, and I encourage all of you who are attending the conference to come along to **this year's Research SIG Open Forum – on Thursday 11 April, 14.45-15.30, in Hall 11a**,.Another opportunity for us to get together is on the previous day, Wednesday, 12.15-13.30, when ReSIG committee members will be meeting each other, and hoping to meet you, at the IATEFL stand in the exhibition hall.

We have an exciting programme of events lined up for the conference, starting with a **Pre-conference Workshop on Monday 8 April** led by Steve Walsh and Steve Mann on 'Researching Professional Talk'. There will also be a full programme of selected talks constituting our **'Research SIG Day' on Thursday 11 April, mostly in Hall 11a**. Full details of all these workshops and talks are at the back of this newsletter. If you can't attend the conference but wish to share any views about SIG activities please feel free to email me directly at any time. We will of course be reporting back on conference events via email, the website (http://resig.iatefl.org) and future newsletter issues.

**Our identity and 'mission'**

At last year's Open Forum, on 31 March 2012 in Glasgow, I think we developed some good ideas, and confirmed what at least those present think the Research SIG might be all about. Taking the second point first (i.e. identity and mission of the SIG), there was general support for the idea that the SIG is largely 'about' supporting 'early-stage' researchers and promoting 'teacher-research', while not neglecting needs of later-stage researchers or relatively academic forms of research. In the latter two areas, our particular focus (as agreed at the meeting) is on sharing information, experiences etc. about particular research approaches / methods rather than necessarily providing a forum for presentation of research *findings*. These clarifications helped a lot, I think, in defining the kinds of article we might wish to see in the newsletter and the kinds of event we might wish to put on. However, the identify and 'mission' of the SIG should probably be an item continuously on the agenda, and your views are welcome at any time!

**Matters arising from last year's Open Forum**

One new idea that came up last year was that we could develop initial bibliographies – and the consensus (relating to the discussion reported above) was that these could relate to particular research methods rather than particular research 'topics' or 'areas'. Sarah Mercer has subsequently taken this idea forward with Anna Broszkiewicz, and you can read more about their work so far at the end of this newsletter.

At last year's Open Forum we also discussed the idea of experimenting with new, relatively informal genres for dissemination of practitioner research. Yasmin Dar, Ana Inés Salvi and Paula Rebolledo have worked on this and created a new 'Teacher-Research Forum' on the website (http://resig.weebly.com/teacher-research.html). We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to report on your own teacher-research.

**Looking forward**

The Research SIG is supporting a full-scale conference on Classroom-oriented Research in Poland in October this year – further details and the Call for Papers are on the back cover of this newsletter. The proceedings will be edited as an electronic version of *ELT Research* and the link will be sent out to all members.

Anne Burns and David Nunan have already agreed to act as mentors / facilitators for our 2014 Pre-conference Event, which we're calling 'Teachers Research'. Please mark the date (1st April 2014) in your diary and think about how you can be there, reporting on a piece of research into your own practice that you'll have done by then (presenters will get a discount on the registration fee). More details will follow, via email and the website

Apart from all we do at present (events, newsletters, online discussions, resources, etc.) we are still hoping to extend the benefits members gain from being part of the Research SIG, including building up a mentoring scheme which would bring together relatively experienced and relatively inexperienced researchers. If you have any ideas about how mentoring could work in practice, please let us know -- we'll be discussing it further at our Open Forum meeting on 11 April.

Finally, a special word of thanks to Ana Inés Salvi and Gosia Sky for their great work as co-editors of this issue, which we hope you'll enjoy reading!

Richard Smith, Research SIG coordinator
(resig@iatefl.org)

# Practitioner Research

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

*In this regular feature or 'space' in the newsletter we invite teachers, academics and 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.*

*In this issue, we feature a report of an event organized by the Research SIG whose authors were the presenters themselves. The event was held on 7th July, 2012 in Leicester.*

# Exploratory Practice: Using Class Time to Help Learners Develop as Practitioners of Learning

**Dick Allwright (University of Lancaster); Yasmin Dar (University of Leicester); Simon Gieve (University of Leicester); Judith Hanks (University of Leeds); Ana Salvi (University of Warwick); Assia Slimani-Rolls (Regents College, London)**

In this whole-day workshop we wanted to show everyone just how much enjoyment teachers and learners can have when they get involved in Exploratory Practice (EP). 'The majority of the audience at the workshop were new to the idea of EP and had come along to learn about its origins and the principles that underpin its practice. So the workshop was tailored to meet their particular needs'. (Yasmin)

It is our experience that in releasing practitioners from the pressure of performativity, EP offers a potential increase in motivation for teachers and learners alike. So we invited everyone to look at photographs (see two below) of teachers and learners (but mostly learners) at the EP 'Annual Event' in Rio de Janeiro in 2009, when 200 schoolchildren and 50 teachers presented their understandings of their learning and teaching lives to each other in a very exciting one-day conference.

Then Simon Gieve (University of Leicester) publicly interviewed Dick Allwright (Lancaster, retired) to establish more of the background thinking to Exploratory Practice, which is a fully inclusive approach to practitioner research. 'Fully inclusive' means it treats both teachers and learners as practitioners, of both learning and teaching. Adopting the role of practitioner researchers as their normal way of using classroom time, they use standard classroom pedagogic practices to develop their own understandings of their learning and teaching lives.

*The EP 'Annual Event' in Rio de Janeiro, 2009*

To take the background thinking further, Judith Hanks (Leeds University) then used her experience of trying out EP in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context to introduce the EP principles and to illustrate the practical challenges of starting off such work. She presented the questions that learners and teachers had puzzled about in her PhD study, such as 'Why can't I concentrate in class all the time?' or 'Why do students find it difficult to remember vocabulary?', and noted the enthusiasm with which learners and teachers in her context had taken up the ideas of EP. Shortly before the coffee break, Aline Santiago's story from her experience with a difficult class in a secondary school in Brazil was used to further illustrate the key principles and ideas behind EP. These two experiences establish the importance of the development of <u>trust</u> as a crucial element in EP work.

*The EP 'Annual Event' in Rio de Janeiro, 2009*

In order to give everyone a better idea of the potential practical implications of the EP principles we then heard three case studies of teachers who had adopted EP in three different pedagogic settings, and whose work illustrated the main issues. Assia Slimani-Rolls (Regent's College, London) illustrated the importance of EP's ideas on working together ('collegiality'), working with everybody ('inclusivity') and helping everybody get the most from it all ('mutual understanding') in her work with colleagues in a business school, using EP as a theoretical framework for the development of a Post-Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education with a focus on teaching international students. Ana Inés Salvi (Warwick University) dealt with the importance, in her experience in an EAP Pre-sessional course, of (a) working on 'life' rather than just on 'work' issues ('quality of life'); of (b) developing understandings rather than just trying to solve problems before you've understood them ('the role of understanding'); and (c) of avoiding un-necessary work ('minimising the burden'). Lastly, Yasmin Dar (University of Leicester) from her setting in a pre-sessional EAP context, spoke about her classroom based work which involves everyone as practitioners ('inclusivity') working together to 'develop their own understandings', all by using existing pedagogic practices as investigative tools (integration'). We were delighted to welcome Hero and Susan, two students from Yasmin's class, who presented their perspectives on the EP work they had done. EP emphasises learner participation, so it was particularly pleasing to hear the learners' side of the story.

During lunchtime we invited everyone to think about what was puzzling for them about their classroom lives, and then Yasmin Dar and Ana Inés Salvi led a session to help us think about how we might make EP happen in our own workplaces, to explore our (and our learners') puzzles further. 'It was interesting to go around the groups and learn from what puzzles colleagues and, when necessary, to help turn questions into 'puzzles' to be explored. Everyone contributed with deep insights into the working of EP'. (Ana)

After the final coffee break Judith Hanks asked us all to consider the challenges and opportunities for EP in our classrooms. She talked about how EP had been incorporated into two different types of pre-sessional EAP courses in the UK, and showed how the principles of relevance, collegiality and working for understanding had encouraged teachers and learners to set their own agendas for classroom investigations and had led to mutual development and greater understanding of issues in classroom language learning life.

Everyone in the workshop then worked together to consider how we might take investigations into our own questions about what puzzles us in our learning and teaching lives further. We asked: 'What might get in the way of doing EP?' and worked in groups to think about what our responses to these challenges might be. At the end of this session, a member of the audience, Chu Po-Ying, who had successfully carried out EP as part of a PhD. dissertation project, was invited to tell us a bit more about her experience.

The day finished with a general question and answer session with the presenters, chaired by Simon Gieve, about going further with EP. There was great interest in the experiences of Hero and Susan (the two students who had kindly joined us), as well as thorough questioning of the Exploratory Practice framework and its history. Dick's article "Why don't learners learn what teachers teach?" was cited as a very early foundation of Exploratory Practice – perhaps one of the first examples of a 'puzzle'! Other questions ranged from the subjective nature of the data (e.g. case studies) and if conclusions drawn from EP research are generalizable or not, and the issue of criticality and EP.

*Simon Gieve interviewing Dick Allwright*

*Left to Right: Ana Inés Salvi, Dick Allwright, Assia Slimani-Rolls, Judith Hanks and Yasmin Dar*

# Feature Articles

# Some Methodological Issues in Using Learner Diaries to Investigate Classroom Language Anxiety

**Christina Gkonou (University of Essex)**

## Introduction

Learners',cognitive ability has long been considered the major factor either facilitating or inhibiting language learning success. However, the last three decades have also seen a growing number of publications on affectivity. Affective variables include language anxiety (LA), the basic conceptualization of which as a by-product of "the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, 128) paved the ground for widespread investigation into this, one of the most important affective reactions to learning a second or foreign language. The bulk of the research, however, has been correlational and factor analytic in nature, with little emphasis on individual case studies. The importance of not investigating just group averages (Williams & Burden, 1997) but accessing the learner perspective and looking at individual learners in all their complexity led to the need for a research tool that would have the potential to offer an insight into learner internal factors, such as beliefs, feelings, and thoughts, and into how the latter are influenced by the context in which learners act. Ushioda (2009, 216) argues for a focus on 'person-in-context', where a learner's agency is influenced by and shapes his/her own "particular cultural and historical contexts". Language learners should therefore be viewed as people whose in-class behaviour is an amalgam of the different contexts they find themselves in. Thus, the emphasis on studying the particular directly implied that research instruments such as learner diaries could be employed as a means of addressing the gap in the operationalisation of LA and of other individual differences.

My own experience of conducting a diary study with highly anxious English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learners will form the basis of this short article. An account of certain practical concerns pertaining to the use of learner diaries will be provided alongside a theoretical discussion of diaries as a tool, with a view to raising awareness of issues involved in this type of research and helping colleagues who may wish to work with learner diaries.

## The context

My study, which spanned three months, focused on the LA of seven adult Greek EFL learners enrolled in general English classes in two private language schools in Greece. The informants received the highest scores of 128 participants on a numerical measure (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale; Horwitz et al., 1986) and subsequently participated in the second, qualitative strand of this project. The students were asked to write their diaries on their computers on a weekly basis and return them to me electronically. They were initially provided with a list of prompts – for instance, what the most/least anxiety-provoking aspect of the lesson was, how they felt when dealing with various activities, or how they believed they manifested their anxiety in class – and were advised to address as many of these as they could in their entries. The learners were also asked to provide a summary of the lessons they attended, and of topics or skills addressed in the lesson that was being written about as this would help me to contextualize the content of the diary entries (Curtis & Bailey, 2009).

## The strengths of learner diaries

A diary study is defined as "a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analysed for recurring patterns or salient events" (Bailey, 1990, 215). Catering for both introspection and retrospection on the part of the learners, it gives researchers the opportunity to unobtrusively study each learner's views on affective factors and generally on those "facets of the language learning experience which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to an external observer" (Bailey & Oschner, 1983, 189). Dörnyei (2007) argues that qualitative research in general involves the study of individuals with as little obtrusion as possible, and diary studies help towards this requirement to a large extent.

Generally speaking, a diary study demonstrates its utility in highlighting the development of participants' emotional experiences over a long period of time and on many different occasions. In fact, Mercer (2006, 66) argues that "the temporally organised longitudinal nature of a diary study is one of its greatest assets". Bailey (1983, 98) also points out that "diary studies allow us to see the classroom experience as a dynamic and complex process through the eyes of the language learner". Hence, focusing on learner's voices and complexity on a longitudinal basis aids language teachers and researchers to better understand classroom language learning.

## Addressing diaries' weaknesses

Diaries are not without their weaknesses though. The major source of weakness is that they are quite demanding for the research participant in terms of time and effort needed to be invested in completing them. Dörnyei (2007) stresses the fact that a detailed training session is required prior to the commencement of diary keeping in order to make sure that informants have understood the research protocol, which will potentially guarantee that they will persist with the study. Nevertheless, researchers who are attempting to implement a diary study should keep in mind that a certain percentage of the participants are likely to drop out.[1] My experience was quite typical: Having initially contacted fourteen EFL learners who gave their consent to participating and attended my training session, I only received seven complete diaries adhering to the research principles set out at the beginning. Half of the informants could not achieve the levels of commitment and dedication required by the study and felt that it interfered with their own schedules. On the other hand, when interviewed, the diary study participants who returned complete entries to me commented that their positive attitudes towards writing in English were motivating enough to allow for their contribution to my project.

It goes without saying that the researcher's role involves finding ways to increase the informants' motivation to keep a diary. First, researchers should simply help participants see the importance of what they are doing. Apart from benefitting the researcher, learners should also feel that the project they take part in is beneficial to them. I tried to highlight this aspect when training the participants. They were all presented with a sheet of guidelines on how to complete their diaries along with a sample diary entry, preceded by an introductory paragraph clearly stating the benefits of the process to them:

> *The diary is a very important and helpful tool, which will enable you to think more deeply about the English lessons that you follow and your needs as a language learner, whilst at the same time providing you with a clear record of the work you do. In addition, it constitutes a means of giving you insightful and valuable writing practice.*

I hoped that, through my providing a heuristic framework for increasing learners' awareness of themselves as language learners and by using the diaries as a medium of regular writing practice in English, informants would be encouraged to submit successful and complete entries. Having the chance to go through their mistakes with me was another possibility offered to them as a compensation for their participation. Most of them were keen on arranging post hoc sessions to discuss ways of improving their writing.

A further weakness of diary studies concerns the content of the entries written by the participants. McDonough and McDonough (1997, 122) point out that "although the diary remains a personal account, the domain is quite tightly specified by the researcher". In fact, diary studies are prescriptive when triangulation or confirmation of findings is sought, in which case participants may often be given a list of possible ideas/questions to consider when completing their entries. However, given the self-reporting nature of diaries, it is entirely up to the diarist to choose the aspects s/he wishes to elaborate on, and also the extent to which s/he will provide candid entries. An amount of reactivity, or the 'Hawthorne effect', is likely to appear, given that certain participants will try to improve or modify aspects of their behaviour in response to the fact that they know they are being studied. One way of overcoming this problem would be to clearly explain to the participants how the diary data will be handled, and that anonymity and confidentiality are assured. Considering ethical issues in research involving human participants is of course crucial in applied linguistics research and a signed consent form could help towards establishing participant-researcher trust.

A second content-related limitation of diary studies is to do with the length and depth of the entries. This can vary considerably in my experience, since, as time passes, informants tend to produce shorter texts or occasionally forget the scheduled response times. Being in regular touch with the diarists and moderating the process if possible could help address this shortcoming. In my study, I had asked the students to return their entries to me electronically by the end of each teaching week. This allowed me to check the extent to which their entries were on-topic and of the required length; should there be a decline in the length of texts produced or any off-topic information, I would ask the students to spend more time on the completion of their entry the following week, and also referred them again to the handout with possible questions to be answered in their entries that was distributed to them during the training session.

Another limitation of diaries inherent in research on emotions and anxiety is that participants cannot always have access to unconscious learning processes or strategies they use to alleviate their stress in the classroom. Learners are not always aware of the connections among events that take place in class, or the reasons why they exhibit certain behaviours or

[1] This may not always be the case with practitioner research, where students may view diary writing as a duty to their teacher.

adopt specific strategies, and therefore are unable to report on them. Instead, it is the researcher who content-analyses data, and creates coding schemes and relational models for an in-depth explanation of emotional and behavioural factors. This lack of evidence of the unconscious may result in incomplete entries, because events that may be of particular interest from the researcher's perspective may be omitted by the participant.

Nevertheless, I believe that this could mostly be the case with younger or less experienced language learners who do not yet possess an inventory of skills and awareness of the process of second or foreign language learning. In contrast, the current study was conducted with adult EFL learners who, according to the demographic information initially obtained, had often already attempted to learn other foreign languages, ranging from modern foreign languages such as French, Italian, or Spanish, to less commonly taught and studied languages such as Arabic and Turkish. I was therefore lucky that my participants had long and varied foreign language learning experience. Additionally, given that my study was focusing on the LA of highly anxious EFL learners, the students who took part in it were mostly aware of the nature of their anxiety as they often encountered it in class. Thus, contextual level factors need to be considered when designing a diary study, as these could help increase the quality and narrow the scope of the data collected.

Finally, a piloting stage should be an important feature of every research study using learner diaries in order to confirm the effectiveness of research instruments. The purpose of my pilot diary study was twofold: a) to ensure the efficiency and clarity of the instructions given to the diarists, and b) to find out whether the frequency of diary entries (i.e., after each English lesson, twice a week) was manageable for them. The data showed that I would be able to gather the information which was relevant to my research topic in the main study. However, with reference to the second purpose of the pilot stage, I observed that the participants had failed to produce an entry for every response time scheduled for them. Consequently, I decided to reduce the scheduled response frequency to just once per week, which sounded achievable to the students even though from my researcher perspective it could occasionally have been at the expense of the richness of data.

## Conclusion

Listing more disadvantages than advantages does not mean that diary studies have more going against them than for them. Rather, my aim is to inform researchers about some of the challenges they might encounter, and suggest various ways in which they could address them accordingly. On the whole, conducting a diary study was a fruitful experience for me, and urged me to start writing my own teacher diary in an attempt to reflect on my own practices for practitioner development purposes, and also as a means of extending my understanding of what diary keeping truly entails. Diaries were also stimulating for the participating students, who maintained that diary writing helped them to increase their awareness of their own learning styles, shape their profiles as classroom language learners, and develop their ability to monitor and evaluate their own learning.

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# Teaching EFL to Young Learners in Large Classes: Difficulties Faced by Chilean Teachers

**Maria-Jesus Inostroza A. (The University of Sheffield)**

## Introduction

In the last few decades, the number of countries incorporating English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as part of their Primary Education compulsory curriculum has steadily increased (see: British Council, 2004). The main assumption of such policies is that teaching English to young learners—understood here as pupils of 5 to 11 years old—encourages motivation, expands intercultural experiences, enhances the use of the language in action and promotes long-term learning (see: Láng, 2009).

Cameron (2001) and Pinter (2006) argue that children who learn a foreign language benefit from interaction, especially if language use and implicit learning are involved. Thus, the more opportunities children have to speak and listen to the language, as well as to use it for specific purposes, the more effective the learning process would be, in theory. However, these opportunities may be restricted by the number of students in a classroom.

The concept of large classes may be difficult to define. Some researchers suggest a general definition such as a class in which there are more students than the teacher prefers and resources are not enough to fulfill those students' needs (see: UNESCO, 2006). Nevertheless, due to the context in which EFL is taught in places like Africa and Latin America, more factors, besides the number of students, must be considered. In the case of this research project, large classes will be understood as groups of 36 students or more in which teachers are overloaded and concerned about the lack of resources, classroom management issues and difficulties to establish effective teacher-student rapport (see: Watson-Todd, 2006; Kuchah & Smith 2011). In many countries, the EFL teaching-learning process tends to be characterized by this type of class (Smith, 2011).

Previous researchers have identified some of the most common challenges that teachers encounter in large classes (see: LoCastro, 2001). Shamim, Negash, Chuku & Demewoz (2007) state that the challenges they identify are consistent with those identified in earlier studies such as those carried out within the *Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project* in the late eighties.

In general, then, the literature is consistent on the issues faced by large class teachers. Firstly, classroom management – particularly, problems in maintaining discipline (see: O'Sullivan, 2006) – is one of the most cited challenges. Secondly, previous researchers (see: Hess, 2001) have determined that evaluating individual learning progress and providing necessary feedback are also difficult to accomplish. Finally, the insufficient quality and quantity of resources available for teaching a large number of students seems to be a common problem (e.g. Shamim, Negash, Chuku & Demewoz, 2007). Such resources may include teachers' attitudes and skills (e.g. adaptability and problem solving skills) and strategies to deal with particular classroom characteristics, as well as material resources.

To date, however, there has been little discussion about how large class size impacts on young students learning EFL. Previous large class research has tended to be restricted to secondary or tertiary education. In addition, most studies on large classes have been focused on African and Asian countries, rather than the Latin American context, which is the focus of my study. This article reports on a small-scale study drawing on both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the experiences – and in particular the difficulties – of a group of 30 Chilean teachers of EFL in large classes of young learners.

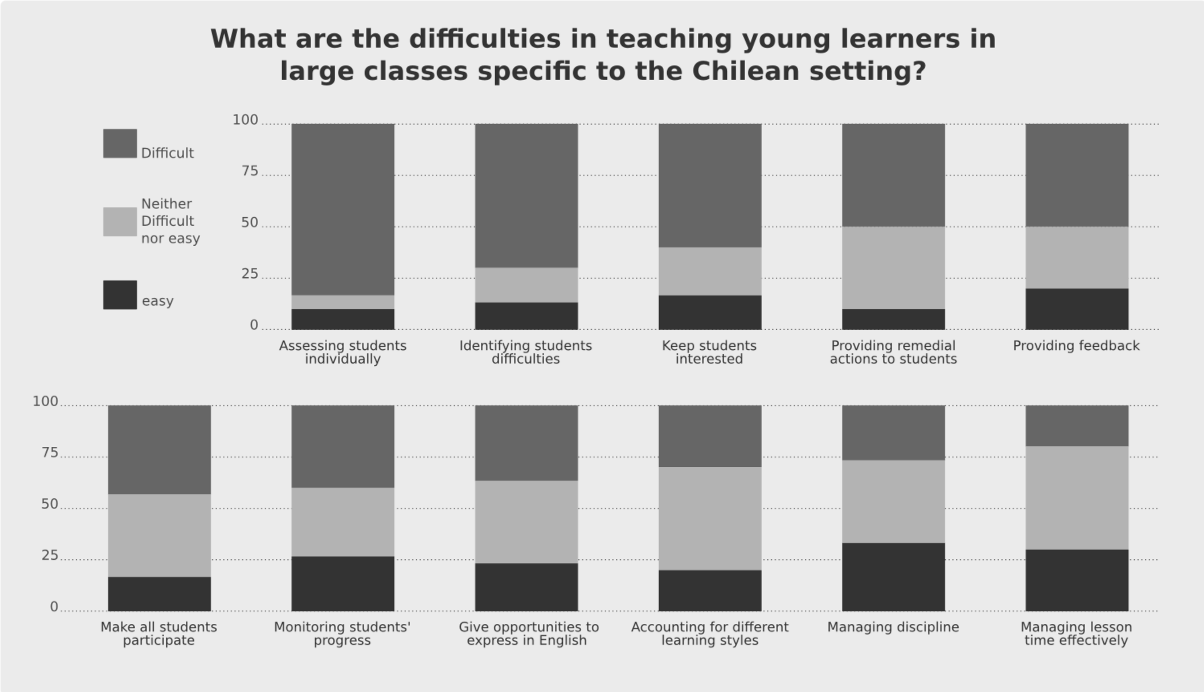
## The context

This research project was developed to explore language teaching in large classes of Year 6[2] (around 10-year-old) learners in Chile. Many primary schools in Chile are characterised by an average of over 35 students per class (OECD, 2004). Chile, as with other countries in the Americas, such as Colombia and Brazil (Sanchez & Obando, 2008; Pagliarini & de Assis-Peterson, 2008), has developed programmes of language teaching in primary schools. Since 2004, EFL has been taught as part of the compulsory curriculum starting in Year 6. A National Syllabus for each year from primary to secondary is developed by the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC).[3] This set of overarching objectives to be covered during the year is mainly oriented to developing communication skill

[2] In the Chilean educational system, Primary Education is called Basic Education and it starts at the age of 6. Thus, the pupils considered in this study, who are in the Chilean 5$^{th}$ Year of Basic Education, would be in UK Year 6.

[3] Schools have, however, the right to create their own syllabi.

**Figure 1:** TEYL difficulties in large classes by frequency.




*The following is based on the interviews and responds to the salient themes which emerged. While the questionnaire suggested that assessing students individually was these teachers' greatest difficulty; not being able to fulfill students' different learning needs emerged in the interviews as the most important overall theme.*

(MINEDUC, 2012), following the international standard of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In addition, to support English learning and teaching in the state-run and subsidised system,[4] in 2003 the MINEDUC created the programme *English Opens Doors.*

In 2010, all Year 12 students (around 16 years old) in Chile were assessed in English for the first time through the SIMCE (Education Quality Measurement System) in English.[5].This exam provided a certificate, which only 11 % of the students succeeded in gaining. Of those, only 12% had studied in state-run or subsidised schools (MINEDUC, 2011). Thus, even though the Chilean government is clearly implementing and developing different ways to improve the language skills of primary and secondary students, there is a clear need for research into the difficulties faced by teachers in this context, but little research of this kind has been carried out to date.

[4] Established after 1980, subsidised schools are privately run and are recognised for "their cooperation with the State's role in education". They are primarily funded by the State and secondarily by charges to families (Almonacid, 2004:168).

[5] In 2010 the test used for SIMCE in English as *TOEIC Bridge*, a standardised test that measured only reading and listening skills. In 2012, the test used was KET from Cambridge ESOL Examinations.

## The study

The study aimed to find out what difficulties are particularly salient to a group of 30 Chilean primary teachers who are teaching young learners in large classes. The study focused in particular on difficulties as they are the starting point for finding effective teaching tools and strategies for large classes. Thirty Chilean Year-6 teachers of EFL in large classes participated by responding to a questionnaire. Their average number of students per class was 38 (SD = 4.3). Their teaching experience varied from 3 to 27 years or more. Seven teachers out of a total of thirty participants were interviewed, as they provided the necessary information to carry out the interview (phone number). The questionnaire was in Spanish, and was piloted. The translation was necessary so as to avoid any language barriers that the use of English could cause to Chilean teachers. The questionnaire consists of ten parts with a combination of close-ended multiple-choice questions, Likert scale type questions and open-ended questions. Teachers were asked to rate the degree of difficulty (from 1 to 5) of a set of situations they might experience in teaching young learners in large classes.

While the questionnaire was developed according to different reading sources in the field of interest, the interview was semi-structured and constructed to probe more deeply into questionnaire responses.

## Findings and discussion

In the literature, there are many examples of difficulties found in relation to large classes. The results from the questionnaire regarding the difficulties as perceived by this group of Chilean EYL teachers in their own large classes are presented in order of greatest to least difficulty (from left to right and top to bottom) in Figure 1.

## Opportunity to speak English

In interviews, teachers referred to providing students with the opportunity to speak English in the lesson as one of the most difficult thing about large classes. They did not explicitly refer to the reasons for this difficulty. However, they did express their concern about the small number of hours of EFL lessons a week and the difficulty of covering the wide and demanding syllabus.
The use of English to communicate orally was not tested in the SIMCE exam in English. Still, its results showed that the students with more hours of EFL lessons a week had better results (MINEDUC, 2011). Therefore, this difficulty could be inferred as requiring an increase in the number of hours of EFL lessons a week, as this could facilitate covering the wide syllabus of Year 6. However, this was not *the* most important difficulty for these Chilean teachers in large classes.

## Different learning styles and needs

Heterogenous groups of students with various learning styles, needs and preferences for pace of learning can be understood as a common situation in any class. In a large class, however, teachers say they find it particularly difficult to identify and respond to these individual features (e.g. Nakabugo, Opolot-Okurut, Ssebbunga, Maani & Byamugisha, 2008). In my study, teachers indeed described their classes as heterogeneous groups of students with varied learning needs, which can hardly be fulfilled within this setting. Furthermore, many of the teachers interviewed pointed out that to deal with students with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and other learning needs was extremely challenging. Similarly, some of them expressed the idea that sometimes focusing on those students restricted attention to advanced students.

## Classroom management

The issue of classroom management, particularly related to the control of discipline and noise, has been repeatedly mentioned in previous studies in the area of large classes. Surprisingly, the findings of my study showed a different perspective. Most of the teachers in this group expressed that they did not have any problems with maintaining discipline. These results suggest further research is needed to identify the reasons for this discrepancy. According to studies carried out in Chile regarding teachers' practice and identity (Avalos & Aylwin, 2007), teachers learn to deal with discipline problems as they gain more teaching experience. In the current study, 14.8 years (SD = 10.9) was the average length of teaching experience. Consequently, the relative longevity of my participants' experience could be a plausible reason for the findings in this area.

## Other relevant issues

Many participants additionally referred to the lack of teaching resources, such as appropriate size of the classrooms and little access to supporting materials, as a difficulty in this context.

In sum, the three major issues for these Chilean TEYL teachers appear to be the problems of "giving learners the opportunity to express themselves in English," "accounting for varied individual learning styles" and "assessing learners individually". It was therefore found that these teachers face similar challenges to those identified in the literature for older learners in other countries. The study also highlighted an interesting difference, in the area of classroom management, which could be put down to years of experience of the teachers in question.

## Implications for further studies and conclusions

This article reported on an exploratory small-scale research project focusing on the difficulties faced by teachers in large EYL classes in Chile. As this kind of study had not been carried out in a Chilean EFL context before, it can be seen as a preliminary investigation, in which the findings presented could be the basis for further studies. Such studies could be implemented with a larger and more representative sample of teachers from the different geographical regions in the country. Thereby, results could be generalised to a greater degree in developing a countrywide diagnosis regarding EFL large classes. Students' perspectives and classroom observations could be included to diversify the sources of information for a better understanding of this issue.

More broadly, the problem of improving EFL skills in Chilean education is far from solved. The MINEDUC National Curriculum needs to take into account the context in which the teaching-learning process is developed, as well as find ways to improve children's EFL skills. Measuring students' abilities should be accompanied by other steps to support this process such as disseminating understanding large classes as part of the Chilean teaching-learning context, more hours of EFL lessons per week and changes to teacher education and curriculum.

The current findings contribute to a growing body of literature on large classes, EFL and young language learners. In fact, research in this area of large classes is still weakly developed (see, however, TELC n.d.). A greater focus should be placed on context – specifically, large classes -- as part of the teaching-learning reality facing many teachers, and there is a pressing need for solutions to be sought, which will enable teachers to teach more efficiently using available resources.

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# Articles by Research SIG Day Presenters at IATEFL 2012, Glasgow

*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. The Research SIG Day presentations at the Glasgow 2012 IATEFL conference are represented here in the form of four written papers.*

# The Nature and Impact of Examiner Questions in Academic Oral Presentations

**Maggi Lussi Bell (Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland)**

My interest in oral testing has run hand in hand with my teaching career over more than two decades. The seeds were sown during my early experiences of speaking tests and my fascination with the process of oral tests, the interactions, which occur and the way they are scored has continued. In recent years, I have also been involved in the development of speaking tests, including the use of academic oral presentations (AOPs) as an assessment tool. While the design and development of corporate exams (e.g. the Cambridge ESOL examinations) are informed by empirical studies and the exams conducted in accordance with strict regulations, I have found little in the EFL literature offering guidance on implementing AOPs as (part of) an oral exam.

Oral presentations are frequently used in a variety of subjects (from science to literature) in tertiary education and are also practised in tertiary level EFL classrooms. As academic oral presentations provide an efficient, effective means of assessment (Sundrarajun & Kiely 2009), promote independent learning, and are highly relevant to academic programmes as well as to students' future careers, their use as both a testing and a teaching tool in EFL can be expected to increase alongside the rapidly growing number of European undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes taught in English outside the UK and Ireland. There is, therefore, a pressing need to address and gain deeper understanding of issues, which may influence their validity.

The research described in this article was undertaken as part of a validation study, which responded to this need. The study explored examiner-candidate interaction during the question phase of AOPs, with a particular focus on the linguistic and interactional support given to candidates, in order to determine factors which affect candidate performance and thereby the validity of the test.

## The academic oral presentation exam

The research was carried out at a university of applied sciences in Switzerland, where presentation skills are taught to undergraduate students as part of the 2-year English course included in their degree programmes. For their final exam, the students are required to give an AOP based on a topic related to their main study area (e.g. organic chemistry). Each student is given a 10-minute time slot: 7 minutes are allowed for the 'prepared' part of their presentation, followed by 3 minutes during which the interlocutor asks the student questions to clarify any ambiguities and develop the topic. Such questions are clearly non-scripted as the interlocutor needs to respond to the specific subject matter and content of each presentation.

To give some sense of audience, the AOP exams are conducted with groups of three or four students. However, due to the time constraints, and because questions can be prepared and corresponding answers rehearsed in advance, students in the audience are not given the opportunity to ask questions in the question phase. Two teachers act as examiners during the AOPs: 1) the interlocutor, who is responsible for managing the exam and asking questions, and 2) the assessor, who completes the score sheet. At the end, the interlocutor gives an overall mark to each student, which is combined with the assessor's scores.

The question phase of the AOP exam reflects an important aspect of real-life use of oral presentations in academic and business contexts, in which speakers are required to provide impromptu answers to questions related to the prepared part of their talk. Furthermore, the question phase is of particular importance for assessment purposes as it is the only stage of the AOP exam which guarantees a sample of student language that has not been rehearsed or learnt by heart (possibly from a text which is not the student's own) and gives the examiners an opportunity to find out whether the student has acquired the language necessary to respond spontaneously to questions on the chosen subject.

## Aims and methodology

My particular interest was in the degree to which the interlocutors co-construct the AOP question phase interaction with the student candidates. Therefore, the study investigated the following:

- the nature of questions posed by the interlocutor
- the nature of interlocutor's additional utterances
- the impact, in terms of opportunity or constraint, of the interlocutor's questions and additional utterances on candidate performance

In this article, I describe my findings in relation to examiners' questions and their impact on the interaction.

To achieve an in-depth inspection of AOP question phase interaction, I chose a qualitative interpretive approach. With the learners' consent, the AOP exams of fourth-semester students were recorded, and 30 of them were then selected for transcription and analysis. The students' levels of English language proficiency ranged from just below B2 to C1 on the CEFR scale, and six different examiners participated in the exams. A methodology informed by Conversation Analysis was used to examine the types of questions asked by the examiners and their impact on the contributions, which followed.

## Examiners' questions

Having identified the examiners' questions, I looked at their number per each student's AOP question phase. Although the role of an assessor did not include asking questions, this was not expressly prohibited (for example, by exam regulations) and during 3 out of the 30 AOP exams analysed, the assessor asked the student one or more questions. These questions were subsequently included in the analysis as they form an integral part of the AOP question phase interaction. As a result, the total number of questions posed by the examiners was found to range from 2 to 15 (arithmetic mean 5.7, mode 4) in the 3-minute question phases. In some question phases, when several questions occurred in a short period of time, students' responses were relatively short and the interaction became conversation-like instead of following the academic convention.

## 'New' questions

The examiners' questions were then categorised. The categories used for 'new' (that is, not rephrased or repeated) questions and the number of questions of each type found in the data are shown in Table 1. The term 'key questions' is used to refer to questions which initiate a probe into a particular area of a student's presentation, to which follow-up questions or requests for confirmation might be added before another area is explored. I further divided the key and follow-up questions into open (e.g. *What accounts for the different qualities of olive oil?*) and closed (e.g. *Could the sludge be use as a fertiliser?*) types (Brown & Hill, 1998), the latter seeking 'yes' or 'no' answers.

**Table 1:** Types of 'new' questions used by the examiners in the AOP question phase data.

| Type of examiner question | Total no. of uses by interlocutor examiner | Total no. of uses by assessor examiner |
|---|---|---|
| Key questions (open) | 48 | 1 |
| Key questions (closed) | 40 | 2 |
| Follow-up questions (open) | 23 | 2 |
| Follow-up questions (closed) | 22 | 1 |
| Requests for confirmation | 34 | 5 |
| TOTAL | 167 | 11 |

Although by their nature open questions seek to elicit fuller answers from oral exam candidates than their closed question counterparts, the research data revealed that almost half of the questions used by the examiners were closed questions or requests for confirmation. As, in line with testing practice in Switzerland, the interlocutors were also the students' teachers, this may be attributable to a 'teacher as examiner' effect, reflecting the fact that '*many of the question types selected and used by language teachers are of the closed variety and produce only short responses from the students*' (Walsh, 2006, 7).

## Student responses to 'new' questions

I used the following five categories to classify student responses to 'new' questions:

- lengthy response (100 words or more used)
- extended response (question answered and further information added)
- short response (question answered but no further information added)
- one-word response
- no response

Overall, almost 75% of the student responses were

**Table 2**: Length of students' responses to the different types of question.

| | Lengthy response* | Extended response* | Short response* | One-word response | No response | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Key question (open) | 7 | 33 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 47 |
| Key question (closed) | 5 | 32 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 45 |
| Follow-up question (open) | 1 | 15 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 24 |
| Follow-up question (closed) | 0 | 22 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 28 |
| Request for confirmation | 0 | 20 | 9 | 9 | 1 | 38 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 122 | 27 | 16 | 5 | 183 |

**Lengthy= 100 words or more; Extended = with added information; Short = without added information*

lengthy or extended (see: Table 2). This high proportion may suggest that, on the whole, students pay heed to the AOP exam format, taking on the role of suppliers of subject-specific information and reflecting the conventions of non-EFL academic presentations by favouring responses extended beyond a short answer. It also implies that the students are mindful of the exam situation, and aware of the fact that extended (or lengthy) answers are generally preferred to short or one-word ones in oral foreign language testing.

Taking the different types of examiners' questions into account, it was found that lengthy or extended responses were given to around 85% of open key questions, over 65% of open follow-up questions, over 80% of closed key questions and almost 80% of closed follow-up questions. With the exception of requests for confirmation, it appeared that the type of question per se had little effect on student responses. In the case of requests for confirmation, the results were somewhat different: no lengthy responses were given and 50% of the student responses to requests for confirmation were minimal, that is, without further information being added. In other words, requests for confirmation were found to be less likely to elicit extended responses from the students than open or closed questions, and therefore, less suitable for eliciting an adequate sample of student language for assessment.

## Student responses to repeated or rephrased questions

The examiners' rephrasals and repetitions of questions that had already been posed were also identified and categorised. In the 30 question phases analysed, there were 6 instances of the interlocutor rephrasing (5) or repeating (1) a question in response to a student's difficulty. This number is surprisingly low, considering the data span around 90 minutes of AOP question phase interaction, and may attest to the students' ability to understand the examiners' questions. The student responses showed that the question rephrasals and repetition facilitated comprehension, and helped avoid breakdown or lengthy disruption of the interaction (in line with the findings of Lazaraton, 1991, 1996).

In addition, there were 14 instances of the interlocutor rephrasing questions before the student started to respond even though there was no evidence of any difficulty (e.g. hesitation) on the part of the student. Although students might be expected to benefit from the extra time given to prepare their answers as well as from the question being simplified, the data were unable to confirm this as no comparisons could be drawn. However, there was no evidence in any of the 14 occurrences that the students were disturbed by the question rephrasals as their subsequent turns proceeded without undue hesitation or difficulty.

## Recommendations

In respect of the examiner behaviour during the AOP exam question phase, the findings of my study suggest the following:

- Examiners should bear in mind the context of the question phase, that is, the clarification and extension of information given in the AOP rather than a conversational exchange. Questions should be used appropriately, allowing candidates sufficient time to extend their contributions to the interaction before a further question is posed.

- As requests for confirmation elicited less information from candidates than other question types, their use should be limited in AOP exams.

- Question rephrasal when candidates do not appear to be having difficulty should be avoided as it raises issues of fairness in terms of all candidates receiving the same treatment during their exam and also reduces the time available to candidates to demonstrate their language skills.

Finally, where an oral exam situation permits (or during mock exams) and with the consent of the candidates, I would recommend that teacher/examiners take the opportunity to record and reflect on their own performance as interlocutors/assessors, recognising their contribution to the co-construction of exam interaction and thereby to the validity of the test. In addition to asking questions and replying to students' responses, which are the focus of this article, examiners could also pay attention to other utterances they use during the course of an oral exam (for example, priming, turn completion and evaluative responses) and their effect on the test interaction. This could be done individually or by groups of examiners, with a view to improving and developing speaking test practice in teaching English as a foreign language.

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# Discovering Research: A Teacher-friendly Approach

**Deborah Bullock (The British Council)**

## Introduction

Teachers of English often find research difficult to access, hard to understand and of no practical value (Borg, 2006; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012). Nevertheless there is a wealth of research freely available online which could be of significant relevance to practitioners. This workshop introduced one such resource, *British Council ELT Research Papers*. However, showing practitioners where to find such papers is not always enough: encouragement, guidance and training may also be required if teachers are to actively engage with research and use it to explore and inform their practice. The aim of this workshop was to encourage participants to come up with practical ideas on how to make research more accessible and relevant to practitioners.

## The workshop

I will provide just a brief overview of the workshop itself here before moving on to present some of the participants' ideas. Powerpoints for the workshop are available on the IATEFL Glasgow website, here: http://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2012/sessions/2012-03-22/discovering-research-teacher-friendly-approach. We began the session by reflecting on and discussing our reading practices and attitudes to research, the benefits of reading, and the barriers. I then introduced the recently launched *British Council Research Papers Series*. These are reports of projects funded under the ELT Research Partnership scheme, now in its 4th year, and written primarily for a practitioner audience. The reports themselves are written in an accessible style, are concerned with areas of relevance to teachers (e.g. teacher training and education, learning and teaching of English at younger ages), and are freely downloadable via http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/elt-research-partnerships. The rest of the session was hands-on. Working with three of the *British Council Research Papers Series*, I led participants in a few activities. I used focus questions to guide the reading of the *Introductions* to the papers e.g. Can you identify the main aims of the study? What is the rationale for the study/what 'gap' in the literature is it seeking to fill? Participants were also encouraged to discuss how relevant the *Recommendations* were to their own contexts, and to consider what would be worth looking into more. Finally, groups were asked to come up with other activities to support teachers in reading research.

In fact, they noted down various practical ideas, some of which apply to *reading* research and others which refer to *doing* research. I have grouped these into categories in the next section and would like to take this opportunity to thank all present for their contributions. In some cases it has been necessary to change the wording to make the meaning clearer.

## Participants' ideas

***Introducing practitioners to research***

1. Send out summaries of articles by email to all staff giving a brief overview of the content. An example of such an email and more information was presented by Nicholas Northall in another presentation at IATEFL Glasgow: http://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2012/sessions/2012-03-21/%E2%80%98thanks-that%E2%80%99-disseminating-articles-sharing-knowledge-worth-it

2. Read journals such as *English Teaching Professional*, *Voices, Humanistic Language Teaching*, *Modern English Teacher* etc. as the research is simplified and practical ideas are presented. These are available online but are not all free.

3. Have a summary of a recent research topic printed off as bullet points and displayed in the staffroom as a poster or hand-out. Have a topic of the month!

4. Hold a workshop on the resources available.

5. Post a weekly or monthly summary on your Intranet of research outside your organisation.

6. Teachers visit research articles website(s), choose something of interest, read, summarise and report.

7. Questioning task – pairs discuss and refine questions they have about their own work and identify what they would like to get information about and then go and find it.

8. The trainer chooses an article (or more) in relation to a topic which is already in focus. All trainees or participants study the articles. Discussion follows on what relevance the article has to the topic. This might be a pre-activity to participants choosing articles on their own.

***Developing reading skills / familiarisation with the genre***

1. Train teachers in how to read an abstract.

2. Show teachers how to actively relate the paper(s) to their field of teaching.

3. Match findings of a research report to different abstracts.

4. Choose a topic of interest to all teachers. Divide a research report into sections. Teachers identify the sections.

5. Use titles and/or abstracts to pose questions/predict to motivate the reader.

6. Treat as a reading comprehension task moving from straightforward comprehension to inference, to relating to context. See N. Grant (1985): Reading the lines (plain sense); Reading between the lines (inference); Reading beyond the lines (applying the ideas to your own world).

7. Match abstracts with introductions; give basic structure/outline to guide reading e.g. gap in the literature, research questions, research methods, research participants, 'treatment', findings, implications etc; predict on basis of abstract what results will be; give guidance on how to critically evaluate research reports; how could you do further research on the topic?

8. Read abstract(s) and decide what questions you would like to ask to promote discussion.

9. Awareness-raising task: From a set of research questions, teachers identify the relevance of a given question. Usually they try to answer it!! So, a discussion is held about 'assumptions' and 'beliefs' which may not be based on evidence.

***Sharing and discussion activities***

1. Task for groups: read a research paper and make a short summary presentation for your colleagues (focus on simplified and selected ideas).

2. Give teachers the same main question before the session, and give different sub-questions. Then put teachers in small groups to discuss.

3. Have discussions centred on the 'conclusion' part of the research articles to stimulate them to go away and read the entire article in their own time.

4. (Online) reading groups – general discussion questions - teachers develop criticality and confidence by discussing.

5. Read recommendations, summarise orally in 2 minutes, discussion of relevance to local context follows.

6. Read an article, think and discuss how the findings can be useful for you and your way of teaching and try something different in class.

***Doing research***

1. Teachers come up with a similar research project that they would like to participate in (being guided by a researcher).

2. Suggest doing a very simple project with learners as 'researchers' e.g. about learning strategies.

3. Invite teachers to participate in research. This leads to more commitment, sharing and engagement, and a practice/reflection cycle. Teachers better understand the role/importance of being an objective observer. They learn to look at themselves as teachers in a non-judgemental way, so learning becomes dynamic.

4. Make action research part of our teachers' personal development plans.

5. Encourage teachers to do their own research (e.g. action research, classroom research, journal writing, and discussion groups) as a means of generating/refining data and questions.

6. Ask teachers to come up with their own research questions (based on own classroom practice). Then find points of connection with others to facilitate collaborative projects.

***General advice***

1. Don't give them too much – it's off-putting!

2. Allow teachers to relate to their own needs, contexts, and preferences.

3. Demystify research and clarify the benefits of reading such texts.

## Conclusion

To conclude, leading this workshop was a positive and encouraging experience. It was well attended by teachers, trainers and researchers who actively contributed to the success of the session, and who demonstrated a genuine desire to see greater practitioner engagement *with* and *in* research. Teachers need engaging activities which can help them to identify connections between research issues and the practices and problems which concern teaching. Such connections are the key to teachers understanding their own practice, and drawing on the literature to extend and improve that practice. The activities suggested above can provide a useful starting point in helping teachers to make these connections. Moreover, workshops like this can provide a social space for the sharing of practical ideas and experiences. My initial expectation was that it would help generate ideas, but in fact, many of the activities listed above were already being carried out by participants in various teaching contexts. It is hoped that by publishing this article, these ideas will reach and be of use to an even wider audience and thereby contribute to "our efforts as a field to facilitate teacher engagement with research" (Borg, 2010, 421).

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Viv Edwards & Daguo Li: Confucius, constructivism and the impact of continuing professional development on teachers of English in China

Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović: Early EFL learning in context – Evidence from a country case study

Sue Garton, Fiona Copland & Anne Burns: Global Practices in Teaching English to Young Learners

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L. Jin, K. Smith, A. Yahya, A. Chan, M. Choong, A. Lee, V.Ng, P. Poh-Wong, D. Young: Perceptions and Strategies of Learning in English by Singapore Primary School Children with Dyslexia

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Will Baker: Using e-learning to develop intercultural awareness in ELT: a critical evaluation in a Thai higher education setting

Alan Waters & Maria Luz C. Vilches: 'Tanggap, tiklop, tago' (receive, fold, keep): Perceptions of best practice in ELT INSET

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# ELT Policy Research in Bangladesh: An Evaluation

**Manzoorul Abedin (University of Cambridge)**

## Introduction

This article draws on ideas from my paper presented at the 46th IATEFL Conference, Glasgow in 2012, and sheds further light on my argument that ELT policymaking in Bangladesh is not adequately research-driven and thereby does not fully address the complex dynamics of English teaching and learning situation in the country. Data used in this article are derived from an extensive literature review as part of my on-going doctoral study at the University of Cambridge, UK.

Because English is deemed important for trade, commerce, career and education in this globalised world, Bangladesh has enhanced the status of English by awarding the language more curricular space and investing more national resources in its teaching and learning (Imam, 2005; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). At the national policy level, this commitment has resulted in: a) introducing English into the national curriculum from the first grade and making its study compulsory for 13 years, b) undertaking donor-funded English teaching projects for English teacher training, c) introducing compulsory English language courses at the undergraduate level in tertiary colleges and public universities, d) introducing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology into the national curriculum and e) enacting the Private University Act, 1992, paving the way for the establishment of English-medium private universities in the country (Rahman, 2007). Sadly, however, no studies in the last decade have reported any improvement in the standards of teaching and learning English in Bangladesh. Indeed, both scholarly views and media coverage continue to express grave concerns about the falling standards of English (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008, 20). So what bars the ELT (English language teaching) policies from being effective in Bangladesh? I shall argue in this article that the answer lies in understanding research into different dimensions of English education in Bangladesh, how these fit together, and how the bigger picture thus gained can (or should) affect policy formulation and implementation.

## The historical context

Let us begin with the recent history of English education in Bangladesh. Languages are sensitive and sentimental issues in Bangladesh, which has a unique history of sacrificing lives for protecting its national language, *Bangla* (Bengali)[6] (Mohsin, 2003; Musa, 1996). English, which came to Bangladesh with British colonial rule (1757-1947), thus relates to *Bangla* in a complex and controversial way. Bathed in nationalistic fervour, language policies in the post-independence Bangladesh promoted *Bangla* at the expense of English. The Language Act of 1987, characterised by an emphasis on "*Bangla* in all spheres" of government administration and education, reduced the role of English to a substantial degree (Banu & Sussex, 2001). In effect, English, hitherto dominating the educated, commercial and social scene, was relegated, due to a shift in emphasis and in national outlook, to a secondary position. However, recognition of pragmatic and global needs has caused English to resurface and, with a steady turnaround in government attitudes during the 1990s, there have been great concerns regarding the overall poor standards of English evidenced in the four major state-run research studies (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). The revitalisation measures mentioned above were introduced during this time.

[6] *Bangla*, the national language, is at the heart of Bangladeshi nationalism, and it is this nationalism that led Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) to its independence from Pakistani rule in 1971 (Hossain & Tollefson, 2007). The 21st of February, which is the International Mother Language Day, is actually the National Martyrs' Day in Bangladesh. On this day in 1952, five Bangladeshis were killed by Pakistani police while they were protesting against the imposition of Urdu as the state language of Pakistan. (Mohsin, 2003; Musa, 1996)

## Project-based policy

Although the enhanced ELT policies would seem to have required making English teacher training an educational priority, Bangladesh has not developed its national capacity to train the number of English teachers required for English teaching. Instead, it has relied on donor-funded English language and education projects which have prioritised English teacher training. The major ELT projects run at the national level with government initiative and assisted by the Department for International Development (DfID) of the UK government were: OSSTTEB[7] (1990-1994), which undertook a baseline study, following which syllabuses from Classes VI-XII were revised, textbooks for Classes VI-VIII were rewritten, and English syllabuses for teacher training were developed; ELTIP[8] (1998-2012) developed textbooks for Classes IX-XII on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), developed a cluster approach to teacher training[9] and a training manual (Paul, 2004); SESIP[10] (2002- 2008) with its focus on 'Teaching Quality Improvement' aimed at institutional capacity-building in secondary education; and most recently English in Action (2008-2017), a project with an aim to equip up to 30 million Bangladeshis with English language skills to participate more effectively in economic activities. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of critical inquiries into these projects that focus on project activities, outcomes and stakeholder interests. Evaluations of such projects, as have traditionally been the case, are commissioned by donors and carried out by experts from donor countries (Brumfit, 1983) with few or no critical inquiries by local authorities and/or independent researchers. Hunter's (2009) analysis of an ELT project in Bangladesh, as Hamid (2011, 291) observes, was presented from the perspective of the project team leader/consultants from the donor country, which led him to: (1) consider the project as generally successful; (2) show a greater understanding of the donor and its aid policies; and (3) blame local stakeholders for all that went wrong. However, these views contradict the local media reports and research findings that point to some critical factors: (1) inadequate pilot studies prior to the project to represent the diversity of a country of over 25 million English learners (see Ellison, 1999); poor planning of budgetary allocation and under-utilisation of project-built infrastructure, and little or no application of trained knowledge; as classroom observation revealed, there in fact little application of trained knowledge and skills gained (Hamid, 2010).

[7] Orientation of Secondary School Teachers for Teaching English in Bangladesh
[8] English Language Teaching Improvement Project
[9] In a cluster approach, trainees from a group of schools located in close proximity receive training together to promote peer learning and capacity building. To organise this, ELTIP set up four regional resource centres (RRC) and 12 satellite resource centres (SRC) (ELTIP, 2009).
[10] Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project

## Fragmented policy

ELT reforms in Bangladesh have also been characterised by a failure to address the latent equity issues in the system. Bangladesh, like many other developing nations, is a divided society, and the gap between the haves and have-nots lies, among other factors, in the traditional realms of education and English as well as geographic location. National school-leaving exams continue to show that students who fail in English are mostly from rural areas (see: Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). There is inadequate budgetary allocation to education (just over 2% of GDP), most of which is spent on teacher salaries. Physical conditions of most of the schools remain miserable, characterised by poor classroom environments including inadequate furniture, insufficient library and laboratory facilities and uncared-for surroundings (Haq, 2004, 52). In rural areas, student dissatisfaction with schools is intense; and those who have financial capacity depend more on fee-paying private lessons for English learning and academic achievement than on school instruction in English (Hamid, Sussex & Khan, 2009). Given the low level of its economic development (per capita national annual income is US$500 and the literacy rate is 53%), Bangladesh is able to allocate just $2 per student per month at the primary level and $4.50 at the secondary level (CAMPE, 2007). Yet, the country has adopted one of the most ambitious ELT policies in the developing world, whereby compulsory English instruction starts at Grade 1 and continues until Grade 12 and occupies approximately 20% of the 1–12 curriculum (Hamid, 2010, 293).

## Conclusion

These findings lead to the conclusion that English expansionist policies in Bangladesh have not been adequately research-driven, in the sense of having failed to take into consideration whether and to what extent such policies were implementable within the country's existing resources and institutional capacity and, more directly, English teachers' professional capacity. It has also become clear that there have been insufficient evaluation studies that balance local perspectives with donor-agency driven viewpoints, thus making it difficult for policymakers to have a broad range of data available from different sources to make informed decisions when the time comes to make major modifications in policy. For policymakers, "establishing lines of communication with stake-holders at the beginning of the implementation of a new policy, and maintaining them throughout is essential" (Fowler, 2000, 317); however, there are signs of a gap between formulation of policy and implementing it, resulting from what Unterhalter et al. (2003) argue is a "fragile dialogue" between policymakers and practitioners. Thus, as argued above, the Bangladeshi ELT policy response to globalisation cannot be considered prudent because the policies have not taken into account the resource and personnel policies required for successful implementation, thereby revealing the weakness of the rigour of the policy process. Bangladesh needs to reassess its English access policy and to redefine the role, status and curricular weight of English in light of overall national resource investment. Donor-funded projects need to be coordinated for a long-term goal of national capacity building and institutional development. At the same time, policy actors and agencies need to explore the potential of local institutions and expertise and encourage local ELT experts, academics and language educators to work closely with primary and secondary schools and English teachers to facilitate exchanges of ideas between the grass-root and 'top' levels.

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# The ELLiE Study: Capturing Evidence Transnationally and Longitudinally

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## Background

This paper reports on the challenges encountered in the design of research methods suitable for a longitudinal transnational study. The large-scale research study of Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE, 2006-10) was conducted by research teams based in seven European countries (Croatia, England, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden), funded by the European Commission with some additional funding from the British Council and the team's respective universities. The study aimed to identify what could realistically be achieved in early foreign language learning in state schools where relatively limited amounts of class time are available for foreign language learning. A condition of the grant funding was that the study should provide indicators that could inform European policy makers, helping to shape and refine current policy.

With the aim of establishing a comprehensive picture of young children's language learning experience from the beginning of early start programmes across the seven countries involved in the study, the research team designed a multi-method framework for data collection and analysis, comprising both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This methodology enabled us to build a transnational perspective for each year of the study, combined with a deeper, more qualitative approach to provide the kinds of evidence that can lead to insights which might not be so accessible with large scale quantitative analyses.

The study broke new ground in adopting a transnational approach to conducting research on young language learners in Europe, with data sources of sufficient scale, geographical spread and language backgrounds (including countries with Germanic, Romance and Slavonic language roots) offering findings that might be of relevance to a number of other contexts across Europe. This transnational approach allowed a focus on a broad perspective for the purposes of informing future European policy, rather than the comparative and rather more competitive picture that is sometimes generated by an international research framework such as has resulted with the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study. Importantly, a longitudinal approach was also adopted for this study, acknowledging the added value of tracking development over time as an indicator of young children's non-linear and often erratic development as language learners.

The ELLiE research began with a scoping study (2006-7) designed to assess the potential viability of a larger scale investigation. This first year allowed the research team to build an initial framework, exploring possible procedures for the subsequent years of the study. Here, I will refer only to research methods developed during the three years of the main study (2007-10).

Over the three-year period a total of 11 data collection tools were designed and administered. As shown in Figure 1, the sequence of administration included a number of instruments which were administered annually whilst others were administered either at the beginning and end of the study (school background, parents' questionnaire) or at the end of the study only (reading task).

**Figure 1**: ELLiE research instruments: sequence of administration (Enever, 2011, 13).

| Research instrument | 2007-8 | | | 2008-9 | | | 2009-10 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School background | □ | | | | | | | | □ |
| Principal interview | □ | | | □ | | | | □ | |
| Teacher interview | | □ | | □ | | | | □ | |
| Lesson observation | | □ | | □ | | □ | □ | □ | □ |
| Lesson observation – focal learners | | | □ | | | | □ | | |
| Class smiley questionnaire | | | □ | | | □ | | | □ |
| Class listening task | | | □ | | | □ | | | □ |
| Class reading task | | | | | | | | | □ |
| Focal learner interview | | | □ | | | □ | | | □ |
| Focal learner speaking task | | | □ | | | □ | | | □ |
| Parent's questionnaire | | | □ | | | | | □ | |

Given the focus of this paper on collecting evidence from young children over time and across varied national contexts I will discuss three research tools here as an illustration of how annual modifications were made in order to fully capture the developing complexity of the children's language acquisition, whilst also responding to maturational development which required a more sophisticated tool design to ensure that learners responded to the task as fully as possible. The following research instruments will be discussed in this paper: class smiley questionnaire and class listening tasks (Parts I and II). Each of these instruments underwent a process of intense review by the whole research team throughout the study as it became apparent that annual modifications would make a vital contribution to the quality of data collected. Below, the modifications / re-design features of each instrument will be outlined, together with some reflections on the process and its effectiveness.

## Class smiley questionnaire

The smiley questionnaire was administered to all children participating in the study (n=1400) towards the end of each school year. The questionnaire aimed to record evidence of children's attitudinal responses to the experiences of foreign language learning (FLL) as these developed over time. At the design stage the team found it particularly important to work together on the selection of suitable questions to ensure they would have equal validity across all national contexts (see Figure 4 for further detail). Analysis at the pilot stage confirmed the initial suitability of all questions, with annual analysis of subsequent data providing a guide to the design of later questions. With the aim of ensuring that all children would fully understand the tasks and find the questionnaire simple and straightforward to complete, the researcher read out the questions to each class (in the children's L1), requiring learners to only tick the smiley face that they felt represented their viewpoint (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**: Smiley face strip for Years 1 & 2 of ELLiE study (ages 7-9 years).

| Tick one face that describes how you feel – (7-9 year olds) | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☹ | 😐 | ☺ |

As children in the study began to mature, the research team considered that it might be important to modify the Smiley questionnaire layout, since by the age of 10-11 years some children might already be beginning to move towards puberty and have developed some resistance to tasks perceived as 'babyish'. Consequently, the instrument was revised to include smaller smiley face symbols, with a 5 point, Likert- type scale, allowing more nuanced responses to be inserted by the children (Figure 3). Additionally, a summary description for each of the 5 categories was added below each of the smiley face categories. This encouraged children to use their reading skills as a further support to the completion of the questionnaire.

For each of the three years of the main study the selection of questions the children were asked to respond to varied with the aim of collecting data that would reflect their stage of FLL. Throughout this three-year period three questions were retained, offering anchor points for the study which might give a reliable indicator of the extent to which attitudes to the FL might change over time (Figure 4, items 1, 2 and 3). All other questions were either modified or completely re-written for each of the three years of the study (note: the abbreviation E/F/S refers to English, French, Spanish – representing the three languages taught amongst the ELLiE study schools). The changes made will be briefly summarized below.

Firstly, the wording of item 4 of the questionnaire underwent some re-phrasing during each year (see items 4.1, 4.2, 4.3) as a result of feedback from researchers, acknowledging the comprehension difficulties experienced by some children when presented with two or more options in one sentence. The wording used in the third year proved to be more straightforward for all to respond to (clarity was particularly important considering that all questions were translated into the relevant national language).

Secondly, children were asked to comment on one favourite activity in year 1 (item 5.1). For many children it proved very difficult to select just one, so this item was adapted to allow for two activities to be identified, with an indication of a first and second most favourite activity listed (item 5.2). This revision proved to be less stressful for children to respond to.

**Figure 3**: Smiley face strip for year 3 of ELLiE study (ages 10-11 years).

| Tick one face that best describes how you feel – (10-11 year olds) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☹☹ | ☹ | 😐 | ☺ | ☺☺ |
| Dislike a lot | Dislike | Neither like nor dislike | Like | Like a lot |

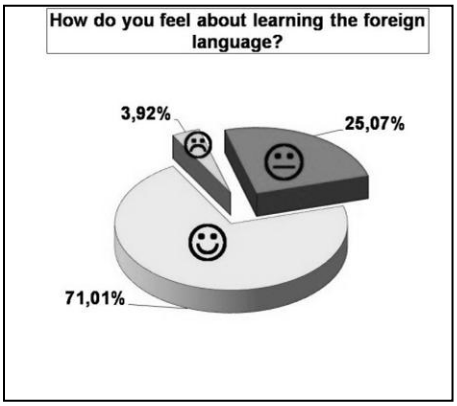
**Figure 4**: ELLiE motivation questionnaire: longitudinal re-framing.

| | Questions | ELLiE Yr 1 | ELLiE Yr 2 | ELLiE Yr 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | How do you feel about learning E/F/S this year? | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| 2 | Do you like E/F/S more, the same or less this year than last year? | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| 3 | How do you feel about learning new words in E/F/S this year? | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| 4.1 | This year, is E/F/S easier, the same or harder for you? | ✔ | | |
| 4.2 | This year, do you find E/F/S difficult, neither difficult nor easy, or easy? | | ✔ | |
| 4.3 | This year, how difficult is E/F/S? | | | ✔ |
| 5.1 | What's your favourite activity this year? | ✔ | | |
| 5.2 | What are your two favourite activities in your E/F/S lessons this year? | | ✔ | ✔ |
| 6 | How do you feel about speaking in E/F/S this year? | | ✔ | ✔ |
| 7 | How do you feel about listening to E/F/S this year? | | ✔ | ✔ |
| 8 | How do you like doing your FL homework? | | | ✔ |
| 9 | This year you have been speaking, listening, reading and writing in E/F/S. Which do you like best? | | ✔ | ✔ |

Thirdly, items 6-9 were introduced in years 2 and 3 of the study to reflect the changing nature of lesson content and to record any evidence of its impact on children's attitudinal responses (Figure 4).

As one illustration of responses to the first anchor question, posed across all three years of the study, Figures 5 and 6 (Mihaljevic and Lopriore, 2011, 45) reflect the extent to which the children's attitudes to FL learning actually shifted over the period of the study.

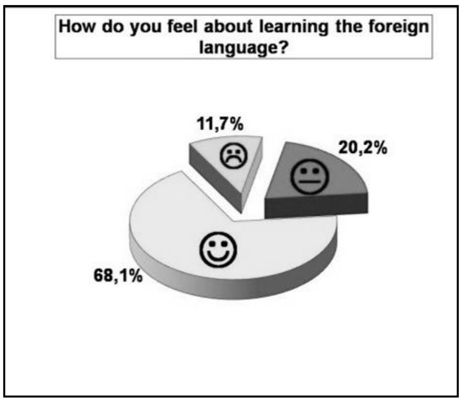
**Figure 5**: YLs' feelings about FLL at start of project.




The decline in levels of enjoyment from 71.01% to 68.1% was only slight, but the further decline in the percentage of children who were less certain about their enjoyment of FL learning (from 25.07% to 20.2%) and the subsequent increase in the numbers of children who considered that they no longer enjoyed learning a FL (from 3.92% to 11.7%) was statistically significant.

In subsequent individual interviews children provided many explanations of why they were no longer enjoying learning an FL, some of which correlated particularly with their questionnaire responses to items 6-9.

**Figure 6**: YLs' feelings about FLL at end of project.



## Class listening tasks

The class listening tasks Part I and Part II were administered to all children (n=1400) at the end of each school year, coinciding with the administration of the smiley questionnaire described above. As with the smiley questionnaire, it was important to standardise task design to ensure reliability across all contexts. The listening tasks brought the added challenge of standardisation across three languages (English, Spanish and French). National, school and class syllabuses were therefore compared to identify vocabulary items which were introduced across all countries and to select frequently used phrases which the children were likely to have come across. These were then checked with teachers to provide further confirmation of their suitability. The pilot phase enabled an assessment of the difficulty factor providing a valuable guide for introducing more and less challenging item selection. Each part of the listening tasks will be discussed separately here as their construction and adaptation differed slightly.

**Part I**: This task aimed to measure children's developing ability to grasp the meaning of a short sentence and connect it with an illustration representing the same meaning. Following a similar format to the smiley task above, children were presented with strips of three different pictures, for which they had to circle the picture that matched the sentence read aloud (in the FL). In the first year of the study the sentence was read by the researcher as there were some concerns that young children might not cope with the pace of a pre-recorded listening task. However, in the following two years a pre-recorded reading of all sentences was used, providing a more consistent rendering of the task for all classes. The additional maturity of the children seemed to allow them to cope satisfactorily with this format, by the age of 8-9 years, even in those contexts where recorded listening tasks were not regularly used in FL classes.

**Figure 7**: Extract from ELLiE Listening task Pt.I (2008).

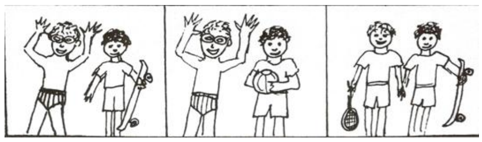
*Circle the correct picture: Listening 1. How many tigers can you see? I can see 3 tigers.*

*Circle the correct picture: Listening 3. What is the boy doing? He's riding a bike.*

As previously, some sections of the task were retained for all three years of the study to provide anchor items with the potential to provide reliable evidence of development over time (see examples of two anchor items in Figure 7).

In total five anchor items were retained throughout the three years. However, during the administration of the second round of listening tasks it was noted that a significant proportion of research subjects were finding the matching activity fairly unchallenging, indicating that a possible ceiling effect had been experienced by some children. To overcome this problem seven new items were included in the task for the final year of administration, introducing a higher level of challenge which resulted in significant discrimination between respondents (Figure 8).

**Figure 8**: Extract from ELLiE Listening task Pt.I (2010).



*Circle the correct picture: Listening 12. "Who are these two boys?" Girl: "They are my cousins. Mark and Jim. Mark is very good swimmer and Jim is an excellent skateboarder".*

**Part II**: For the second part of the Listening task children were given a picture of a room containing various familiar items related to the vocabulary introduced during the school year in all study contexts (Figure 9). In the first year children were asked to listen to sentences read out by the researcher (in the FL) and mark each item with a number. In subsequent years a recorded version was used, as above. Examples of the spoken text for the first year of the study included such items as:

- Number 4, The BIKE is in the garden
- Number 5, There's some FRUIT on the table

**Figure 9**: Extract from ELLiE Listening task Pt.II (2008).

In the second and third year of the study it was recognised that use of an identical picture could be problematic since some children might recall the picture from the previous year and respond negatively, perceiving this to be simply a repeat exercise. To avoid this possibility some modifications were made to the picture each year and children's attention was drawn to these modifications.

In the re-shaping of this task for each successive year the research team modified the spoken text for years 2 and 3 to reflect the kinds of classroom interactions observed by the team during lessons. This included short 'conversations' between two speakers, including key vocabulary which children could identify and mark on the picture. Examples in year 3 of the study included:

1. "How many horses are there in the picture?" "There's one horse in the picture".
2. "How many brothers and sisters does the baby girl have?" "She has two brothers and one sister".

As with the previous tasks, a number of anchor items were retained throughout all years to ensure a measure of progress over time could be observed.

## Discussion

It is important to note that the Listening tasks described above were administered as tasks, not tests (similarly, this applied also to tasks in speaking and reading). For some, the distinction may be a fine one, but for the research team these tasks were designed to contribute to a holistic picture of early language education across a range of contexts rather than simply as a measure of linguistic competence. As such, it was possible, through lesson observations, parents' questionnaires, interviews with individual children and with their teachers, to build a picture of children's development as language users over time, taking into consideration attitudinal development, the rise and fall of motivation, the factors that influenced this and the outcomes over the period of the study.

In this short article I have aimed to illustrate the complexity of developing research tools that can be effectively administered across a range of national contexts, in a longitudinal study. As a research team we acknowledge that we were breaking new ground in this study and recognise the challenges we confronted. We hope to have contributed to the development of new ways of addressing such approaches to research and to have highlighted the potential value of transnational studies as a tool for sharing expertise and learning across national boundaries.

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## Acknowledgements


I would like to acknowledge the work of all members of the ELLiE team, who jointly designed and refined the research tools described in this paper. Only through this collaborative effort was it possible to prepare tools that could be administered with equal validity in all the research contexts.

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# Research SIG Event Reports by Scholarship Winners in 2012

*In 2011 IATEFL Research 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 (the first such report*, by Larysa Sanotska, *appeared in issue no. 26 of* ELT Research*). In 2012 the SIG itself was very active in arranging workshops, and below we feature four reports by SIG scholarship winners about workshops organized by the SIG which were led by Zoltán Dörnyei; Ema Ushioda, Richard Smith and Sarah Mercer; David Nunan; and Anne Burns. Another 2012 SIG workshop, on Exploratory Practice, is reported on in the very first article of this issue.*

*Video extracts from the workshops by Zoltán Dőrnyei, and Ema Ushioda, Richard Smith and Sarah Mercer have now been made available as an IATEFL Research SIG resource (see details further below).*

## 'Questionnaire Design and Analysis': Report on a workshop by Zoltán Dőrnyei

**Jessica Mackay (University of Barcelona, Spain)**

It was snowing in Coventry. From taxi drivers to ticket collectors, there had been talk of little else from the moment we all converged from as far afield as South Korea, Switzerland and Solihull. Fortunately, the much-anticipated snowfall and consequent disruption did not materialize and Professor Zoltán Dörnyei was able to cross the Midlands for the IATEFL Research SIG special one-day workshop on 10 February 2012. 'Questionnaire Design and Analysis'. Somehow the title of the event didn't suggest fireworks. Even those of us, like myself, extremely motivated by the subject, had no idea that this workshop was actually going to be fun. For that we need to thank prof. Dörnyei's quietly witty delivery, which turned an interesting subject into an engaging and very entertaining event.

We started with the basics. What are questionnaires and why do we use them? In brief, questionnaires are *self-report* instruments that gather data on unobservable phenomena such as attitudes, beliefs, behaviours etc. as well as factual information. While questionnaires are extremely time and labour efficient, they are not without their drawbacks, and the purpose of the workshop was to walk us through some of the pitfalls and show us how to avoid them. To illustrate these, prof. Dörnyei drew on examples from his own research. It's hugely reassuring to know that such a renowned expert in the field has also had to go back to the drawing board on occasions. With the benefit of hindsight, he emphasised that an investment of time and effort in the design of the questionnaire will inevitably save frustration at a later date. I found myself wishing wholeheartedly that I'd been able to attend this workshop a year ago. Here are some of the main recommendations.

**Use multi-item scales, not open-ended questions.**
Scales are clusters of differently worded items, which refer to the same idea. If there is 'commonality' and the different items agree with each other, then it shows that the underlying construct is solid.

It's common to use 5-, 6- or 7-point *Likert scales* in questionnaires. One interesting observation is that the 6-point scale does not allow the respondent to 'sit on the fence', as they have to choose an option from either the more positive or negative side of the scale. Similarly, *Semantic differential scales* require the reader to choose a point between two opposites, for example;

Difficult …..|…..|…..|…..|…..|…..|….. Easy

This type of scale provides a very visual stimulus and may induce a more immediate and instinctive reaction.
A third possibility is the *Numeric rating scale* where the respondents decide how much they agree with a statement and choose from the numbered options;

very much 5) 4) 3) 2) 1) not at all

This last example requires a certain level of cognitive processing which may detract from the instinctive first reaction that the researcher is looking for. However, it is desirable to use different types of scale in order to break up the page and create variety and interest.

**Take time to write items that work.**
Questionnaires assess unobservable phenomena such as attitudes and beliefs, so the wording of the statements used is of vital importance. The choice of phrase e.g. 'forbid' v 'not allow' can elicit a significant difference in responses as 'forbid' is seen as much stronger and more severe. Having said that, it is generally best to avoid negatively worded statements, as they require more cognitive processing.

| × | ☺ | |
|---|---|---|
| The government should forbid smoking in public. | The government should not allow smoking in public. | *'Forbid' is a laden word that provokes a more extreme reaction.* |
| I don't like doing questionnaires. | I dislike doing questionnaires | *Negatively worded items require more cognitive processing* |
| I have a good relationship with my parents. | I have a good relationship with my father. | *Avoid 'double-barrelled' questions. In the first case, there are two parents and the relationship may not be the same with both.* |
| I tend to prefer native speaker teachers. | I prefer native speaker teachers. | *Avoid words like 'tend' or 'occasionally' which are relative and ambiguous.* |

At this point, prof. Dörnyei gave us a useful tip: the best items are the type of statements that the respondents would produce in an interview situation, so 'steal' items from interview data whenever possible.

**Consider the content.**
It may be necessary to translate the questionnaire from English into the respondents' L1. In this case, you need to ensure that the two versions are as similar as possible. This can be verified by recruiting an independent translator to 'back-translate' the items into English. Always include questions about personal information at the end. By the time the respondent has invested the time and energy in answering all the questions, they will be better disposed to add a few biographical details. Give reasons for the questionnaire in an introduction and, very importantly, thank the respondent for their participation, both at the beginning and the end.

**Format the questionnaire carefully.**
We don't generally do questionnaires for fun. Therefore, when designing the questionnaire, it's important to develop a layout that will be attractive, or at least not off-putting, to the respondent. Experiment with different font sizes in order to occupy as few pages as possible and not appear so daunting. Break up the text with different item types and different fonts. Add a few illustrations if possible.

**Pilot the questionnaire.**
Piloting the questionnaire allows you to deal with potential problems before you commit to the final instrument. The responses can be checked for omissions, range and internal consistency. Using a statistical software programme, each scale can be submitted to reliability analysis, in order to check that all the items are measuring the same target area.

**Administering the questionnaire**
Once the questionnaire has been designed and piloted, the data collection can begin. The literature varies as to the ideal percentage in order to represent the population in question. Prof. Dörnyei emphasised that there should be a minimum of 30 people in order for the sample to have a normal distribution.

He also pointed out that the more professional and courteous we can be during the administration of the questionnaire, the more likely people are to take the project seriously and to answer the questions more completely. Ideally, this means giving advance notice, having a survey administrator in place of the normal class teacher and emphasising the confidential nature of the information. One observation that I found particularly interesting is that any kind of questionnaire where the respondents are self-selected (e.g. an on-line survey) will clearly not be wholly representative as it is precisely those who are most motivated or interested who will choose to answer. This should be reported, at the very least in the limitations section of the study.

**Data analysis**
There's no getting away from it. We need to bite the bullet and use statistical software such as SPSS to analyse the data efficiently. Prof. Dörnyei was obviously aware that this is a fairly daunting challenge for most novice researchers so he was at pains to point out how easy the software is to use. Once familiar with the program, the researcher can use *descriptive statistics* to summarize data and *inferential statistics* to examine whether the results can be generalized to the whole population. It was made very clear that any non-significant results must be ignored in research studies. Prof. Dörnyei drew the morning to a powerful conclusion by presenting us with what he called the *ultimate statistical sin*.

'Although the mean difference between boys' and girls' scores did not reach significance, girls tended to do better than boys'.

This is precisely what we must **not** include in our research results.

(At this point, it dawned on me that the provisional version of my results section was going to need some serious revision!)

After lunch we played games. No, really! We worked as groups to evaluate an example questionnaire from the newly published Questionnaires in second language research (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010) and were slightly relieved that nobody, not even the authors themselves, gave it 100%.

Then we honed our diplomacy skills by attempting to write items on potentially delicate subject matter and voted to choose the best examples. Prof. Dörnyei suggested some strategies for diffusing sensitive items, including the following:

- Suggest that the behaviour is common. e.g *Many teachers today find it difficult to mark assignments on time.*
- Assume the occurrence of the behaviour. e.g. *I find it difficult to mark assignments on time.*
- Include reasons that explain the behaviour. e.g. *Due to my heavy workload, it is difficult to mark assignments on time.*

Finally we tried to write examples of bad questionnaire items to illustrate how well we'd understood what *not* to do. I won't include the examples here but suffice to say that we were rather good at this activity!

Needless to say, the day was thoroughly enjoyable and provided not only the benefit of an expert sharing his knowledge of a specialist area, but also a masterclass in how to give a dynamic workshop which really made the theory come alive.

To end on a personal note, I would like to thank the members of the IATEFL research SIG scholarship committee, without whose generous help I would not have been able to attend this very special event. I'm sure many of you will identify with the challenge of working towards a doctorate whilst in full-time employment and bringing up two small children into the bargain. Under these circumstances it is virtually impossible to attend international conferences without a grant or institutional funding. This event is particularly memorable for me personally as it allowed me to meet professor Dörnyei himself. Not only have I long admired his writing, but it is his theory of the L2 Motivational Self System (2005) which I am endeavouring to research in pursuit of my PhD.

Thank you to the IATEFL Research SIG organisers and, of course, to Prof. Dörnyei for such an enlightening day.

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*[Ed. Note: Excerpts from the workshop, filmed and edited due to the generous assistance of Coventry University, have been made available as an IATEFL Research SIG resource here:* http://wwwm.coventry.ac.uk/researchnet/IATEFL/Pages/Workshop1.aspx

# 'How to Combine Teaching and Researching: Focus on Learners and Classroom Language Learning': Report on a workshop by Ema Ushioda, Richard Smith and Sarah Mercer (Research SIG Pre-conference Event 2012)

**Mohamed Tahar Asses**

I am a full-time teacher of English in Debbouz Ahcene Secondary school in Skikda, Algeria. I am concurrently undertaking a Master's degree at ENS teacher training school in Constantine, Algeria. The main focus of my dissertation is on enhancing learners' receptive skills by adapting materials in the textbook to suit mixed-ability classes, with a focus on third year secondary school textbooks. The purpose of my study is to help teachers and researchers look positively at such classes and to suggest inclusive teaching techniques whereby no learner is left behind. Being a teacher-researcher myself, I could not resist the temptation of applying for the Research SIG scholarship to attend this thought-provoking workshop, apparently designed just for people like me.

On 19 March 2012 in Glasgow, the largest city in Scotland, Richard Smith (University of Warwick), Sarah Mercer (University of Graz) and Ema Ushioda (University of Warwick) collaborated actively and harmoniously to give four outstanding, informative presentations that generated fruitful discussion among the 45 attendees. Besides, the hands-on tasks and ice-breakers maintained our interest and helped us to talk to each other and share ideas and most importantly get a feel for the practicality of the suggested tools and techniques. I very much liked the idea of summarizing our thoughts at the outset on posters that included four categories: the positive potential of combining teaching and researching, the challenges involved, our ideas for how to make it successful, and questions and concerns about the issue. These summaries were built on and referred to now and then throughout the day.

The first session 'Teaching and Researching: Experiences and Issues' was led by Ema Ushioda and Richard Smith. The main focus was on the possible relationships between forms of teacher inquiry and teaching. The argument was made that researching combines successfully and fruitfully with teaching when the processes of investigating learners enhance their learning. Hence, balancing teacher and researcher roles requires researching to act as teaching and ideally research tools to act as pedagogical tools. The aim, at least partly, is to aid learners in understanding themselves and to increase their autonomy. This was very good news for teachers like me who had (previously) been reluctant to do practitioner research, mistakenly thinking that it overloads them with parallel tasks that would negatively influence teaching and learning. At the same time, practitioner research can enhance the teacher's understanding of learners and learning and, thus, help us develop professionally in providing quality education.

Richard Smith's own presentation was devoted to student feedback, learner (and teacher) autonomy, and teacher research. He stressed the importance of drawing on learner feedback both in order to adjust one's teaching accordingly and to enhance students' autonomy and awareness of learning and teaching. The notion of *feed-forward* as a type of formative feedback can contribute to combining teaching, researching and learning in practitioner research. Feedback can be elicited in simple categories such as 'good points/points to improve', 'stop/start/continue' or 'keep/change/ditch'. The content analysis of items within each category has the potential to develop teachers' reflective practice and autonomy and to generate ideas about future actions and further research. This presentation enticed me to immediately embark on using the techniques with my learners to continuously make informed decisions about adapting and manipulating the factors that determine task difficulty for teaching listening and reading in my experimental classrooms.

Just after lunch, Sarah Mercer talked about learner histories. As research tools and pedagogical tools at the same time, the latter are "self-report-based, introspective research narratives written by students about their own language learning. In language learning histories as a form of research, students thoughtfully take a second look at their own past learning experience"(Oxford, 1995, 582). These learner narratives can be advantageously used by teachers, researchers and learners. According to Sarah, they help teachers approach learners as individuals, enhance group dynamics, foster learner metacognition and practise communicative writing. Learners can enjoy authentic, personally-relevant writing practice and gain valuable metacognitive knowledge to empower them to guide and support their approaches to learning and construct positive learner identities. As for researchers, they gain rich, useful data to understand learning processes from learner perspectives. For this very reason, I have decided to include some open-ended questions in my questionnaires that invite learners to write very short autobiographical paragraphs that would help me understand learner uniqueness and get holistic data about them. Sarah's sample learner histories illustrated how these can be used and analysed.

Additional tools for teacher research were illustrated by Ema Ushioda in the last presentation. She introduced 'I-statement analysis', which is "a form of discourse analysis that examines how people speak or write in the first person to express actions, feelings, abilities, goals…and how they construct particular socially situated identities through language" (Gee, 2005, 141). These statements are systematically analysed and categorised on the basis of the predicate following 'I'. Categories such as cognitive, affective, state vs action, ability vs constraint and achievement are good cases in point. This was a new data gathering tool for me -- one that systematically quantifies qualitative data for the purpose of exploring learners' perceptions of their learning. No sooner had I landed back home than I started planning and trying out an I-statement analysis of some of my learners' personal reflections. The experience encouraged me to think of using it as a research tool in my future research work.

The event was wound up with some feedback from the participants on the event's good points and points that need improvement.

In a nutshell, the one-day pre-conference workshop on 'How to combine teaching and researching: Focus on learners and classroom language learning' was an unparalleled opportunity for me to meet teachers and researchers from almost every corner of the globe. It helped me see teaching and research as complementary rather than separate activities and provided me with tools for balancing research and learning enhancement; it also gave me the self-confidence to examine messy and puzzle-oriented data. Last but not least, it encouraged me to plan workshops that would motivate secondary school teachers to carry out practitioner research in my own country. It was so rewarding an experience to attend such a big ELT event that I guess it will play a seminal role in my professional growth and academic maturation. Hence, a big thank you is due to the IATEFL Research SIG for their generous support. I would also like to express my gratitude to the British Council Algeria for supporting me to attend the rest of IATEFL conference and for promising help to me in organizing workshops in Algeria.

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*[Ed. note: Powerpoint slides for the above mentioned presentations are available on the Research Sig website along with handouts for the workshop tasks at* *http://resig.weebly.com/resources.html*

*The Research SIG – with the support of Coventry University – has also made edited video extracts from the workshop available for those unable to be there on the day:*
*http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3fR9OKNAMY&list=EC63CA3887ECD6FA91&index=1]*

# 'Qualitative Research in Language Education': Report on a workshop by David Nunan

**Kashmir Kaur (The Language Centre, University of Leeds)**

RESEARCH IS… SEXY?

Well, according to David Nunan, this is exactly what research is. But what do you think?

At the IATEFL Research SIG's 12th May workshop in Graz, Austria, on qualitative research this was discussed at the outset, and a variety of interesting and amusing answers were suggested. This was an excellent start to the seminar as we were thrilled to confirm that we were here to discuss and learn about something that was not only 'exciting' but 'sexy' too.

It was extremely interesting to hear Nunan enthuse about his passion. He commenced by explaining how his studies brought him to the UK from his native Australia and that this was the start of his life-long love affair with research. Over the course of the seminar we too were soon immersed in this 'affair'.

There are two key paradigms in research: qualitative and quantitative. At times different terms are used to refer to the same paradigms, such as 'naturalistic' and 'psychometric', respectively. Nunan stressed the point that there is no inherent superiority in either research paradigm. He argued that the essence of research is to put into motion a set of procedures to make sense of the world - research is carried out in order to find out what is going on in the world and how to improve situations. It is imperative to make explicit the sources used and share the results, thus making them available for critical scrutiny by others.

The various components of research were looked at in detail. For example, what exactly is data? Nunan suggested data consists of "external records of events", taking this from the anthropologist Gregory Bateson. Reliability was dissected into 'internal' (consistency) and 'external' (replicability), as was validity into 'internal' (confidently claiming the independent variable made the difference) and 'external' (generalizability). Variables, such as nominal, ordinal and interval were discussed as well as constructs. If we turn an event into a 'thing' that we cannot see, we are creating a construct, which enables us to deal with it. All constructs are variables but *not* all variables are constructs. This led to a lively discussion about variables and constructs. For example, it was agreed that such concepts as motivation, proficiency, aptitude and intelligence are constructs and that puberty and gender are variables. Psychometric research tests the strength of relationships between variables. However, for some types of research, e.g. qualitative research, where there are other rules, internal and external validity are irrelevant.

With respect to qualitative research two approaches were discussed – case study and ethnography. Patsy Duff's championing of case studies was quoted: she points out they are strong in reality, the data they provide can be re-interpreted in the future and they are relatively accessible. Nunan highlighted that 'reliability' and 'validity' are irrelevant to case study research. However, there are alternative rules such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Ethnography, with its roots in anthropology, was considered next. Nunan mentioned that ethnographic anthropologist Margaret Mead's detailed interviews with Samoan females concluded that these women always wanted sex (yes, sex yet again). However, years later it transpired that the women had told Mead what they thought she wanted to hear. This led to a discussion of principles of ethnography, one of which asserts that a theoretical framework is required, not just description. Analysing qualitative data successfully entails finding patterns, developing themes and condensing meaning. For example, to analyse a case study based on interviews we would need to condense the data for insights and simultaneously discard the non-salient points. However, the condensed version would ideally need to be checked by the interviewee to ensure they agree that it is a fair representation. According to Nunan, this 'grounded' approach will allow theory to emerge from the data. It is time consuming but well worth the effort. Nunan also likened qualitative research to making champagne – good champagne takes time and needs to be nurtured, just like good research.

Attending this seminar refreshed my knowledge with respect to research in general and qualitative research in particular. It also gave me new insights into how to prepare, plan and conduct qualitative research. Principally, I realized that we should not be disheartened if during research the whole premise of the research question is turned on its head and a new research question arises. This is what makes research exciting and - sexy!

I cannot finish without saying a huge thank you to both the IATEFL Research SIG and to Mary-Anne Ansell, Executive Director of The Language Centre at University of Leeds, for enabling me to attend this fascinating and informative seminar. Thank you.

*[Ed. Note: Excerpts from the workshop, filmed and edited by Coventry University, have been made available as an IATEFL Research SIG resource here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7jovTLb9-Q&list=EC8E7024B9C0B2E7C8&index=1]*

# 'Doing Action Research in the Language Classroom': Report on a Workshop by Anne Burns

**Divya Brochier (Ecole Centrale Paris, France)**

I was recently given a scholarship by ReSIG to attend a 3 November 2012 Action Research workshop at the University of Reading, UK, led by Anne Burns.
Upon meeting Anne I realised how limited my understanding of Action Research had been, despite having grappled with it with some success for my Master's eight years ago. My interpretation of Action Research was ordinarily practical, within a rather problem-solving mode of reflective practice.

One of the first notions that Anne critiqued was 'reducing' the definition of Action Research to the process of Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Confining our understanding of it in this manner is reducing the complexity of the larger critical paradigm it stems from. This has been one of my most habitual reflexes in my reflective journey; to reduce the infinite space that research questions raise. And the shift that happened in me from meeting Anne was understanding that it is sometimes by reflecting on the voice, the self that is articulated through voice, that asks the question -- and not just through the actual research question that a solution is revealed. What I mean by 'voice' here is the practitioner voice, a "voice as present, stable, authentic, and self-reflective" (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009, 2).

What I learnt from this workshop, is that thinking about our voice as practitioner researchers is one of the most useful enterprises we can undertake as teachers. It takes us beyond the trouble-shooting problem-solving mode of intense daily classroom life and affords a capacity for active reflection and a larger understanding of what's going on, which ultimately reshapes our practice at its core and not just in terms of its methods.

Anne shared with us such rich stories of her research journey and those she guides as a doctoral supervisor and action research mentor. The recurring theme, for me, in these very thick descriptions of practitioner reflection was the unique analytical data that the act of writing creates. We understand all sorts of things when we put pen to paper (to use a wholly outdated yet adequately charming image of the practitioner journal).

The most powerful of these descriptions for me, was when Anne told the story of a teacher she worked with who conducted Action Research to better understand the motivational processes among her students (Koromalis, 2011). In her research she came to the realisation that in worrying about the overall dynamics of her classroom, she was allowing herself to be guided by the least motivated student.

Hearing this was the moment that shifted my reflective practice and my whole perception of classroom dynamics. I definitely have a 'no-child-left-behind' policy when it comes to motivation and outside my classroom my demotivated students get so much more of my time, energy and pedagogical space than my motivated ones. So for the past few weeks I've been asking myself, how is this shaping or distorting my choices of materials, for example... and this is perhaps the beginnings of an Action Research project. So one Australian teacher's story has sparked off another one in France, through the wonderful conduit of voice, voice that is given value and an audience. Surely this is what it's all about?

Anne described Action Research and the recognition of practitioner research voices in publication as having grown exponentially in the last decade. She also spoke about this shift in attitude being reflected in spaces like Cambridge ESOL's *Research Notes* that institutionally validate this growing field.
I am fairly new to the world of doctoral research and the world of practitioner research is one that I stumbled into after some struggle with and feelings of intimidation towards the 'ivory tower' of academic rank and publication thresholds.

I realise that saying this makes practitioner research sound like it sits at the bottom of this vertical structure but it doesn't. What I believe is that practitioner research is a robust route towards breathing in the essence of why we ask these questions, why we research and why our profession necessitates this shared quest for understanding the causes and the processes that shape our practice.

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### 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:

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

# Links & Resources

## Instruments for Research into Second Language Learning (IRIS)

**Emma Marsden (University of York, UK)**
**http://www.iris-database.org**

IRIS is a digital repository of data collection instruments used for research into second language learning and teaching. This freely accessible online database contains an extensive range of instruments, embracing a wide range of research areas, methodological and theoretical perspectives, and different media and modes of data elicitation. It is fully searchable using parameters such as author, instrument type, target language, teaching intervention, linguistic feature, age of learner.

IRIS will facilitate research into areas such as the effectiveness of instruction, the geographical and sociocultural contexts in which second languages are used and learned, opinions and attitudes about language use and teaching, and linguistic and cultural identity.

IRIS will bring far-reaching benefits to the field of second language research, ensuring greater visibility and accessibility of primary data collection tools, improving the quality of meta-analyses, and facilitating the replication of research.

IRIS already has submissions from highly cited international investigators, and is well supported by a network of journal editors, and professional teaching and research associations. The repository is independent of country, funder, or publisher.

If you have a data collection instrument that has been used for a publication in a peer reviewed journal article or book, or an approved PhD thesis, please submit now at http://www.iris-database.org. It is now possible to search for and download instruments.

IRIS is funded by the *Economic and Social Research Council* (UK). The project is directed by Emma Marsden (University of York) and Alison Mackey (Georgetown University)

## Research SIG Bibliographies for Early-stage Researchers

**Sarah Mercer (University of Graz, Austria)**

IATEFL's Research SIG is aiming to put together select bibliographies of key works for specific research approaches and issues in research in order to help early-stage researchers. The underlying idea is to present a selection of materials that may be useful for designing and conducting research and analysing data in relation to English language teaching. Clearly, we cannot possibly seek to be comprehensive, but, hopefully, the lists can serve as a useful starting point for anyone setting out in the field. Gradually, we intend to cover a range of specialist areas but, for the moment, we would like to begin with some general overview and introductory texts that we think may be of use to early-stage researchers. For each area we will work on, we will limit ourselves to a maximum of 5 items in order to maintain a manageable overview with a focus on quality, rather than quantity. We hope you find it useful.

Should you have any suggestions concerning books, articles, websites or other resources you feel we should include, please email us at: resigbiblio@gmail.com. We are open to ideas and would be very grateful for any feedback on the project. Anna and I have already come up with suggestions for two areas namely 'General overviews / Introductions to research in education' and 'Introductions to research in applied linguistics and second language learning', The next two areas we intend to cover are: General guides to quantitative methods; General guides to qualitative methods; and General guides to mixed method studies. We would be happy to receive any recommendations in these areas.

Details of the books we have identified so far are here: https://www.zotero.org/groups/iatefl_research_sig

# Looking Forward to IATEFL 2013, in Liverpool

# Researching professional talk (8 April 2013 Research SIG Pre-Conference Event Preview)

**Steve Walsh (Newcastle University, UK) and Steve Mann, University of Warwick, UK)**

This workshop will examine a range of approaches to collecting and using spoken data as a means of improving professional practice. The focus will be on helping participants to become active reflective practitioners and researchers of their own contexts. There will be an emphasis on data-led approaches which highlight the importance of dialogue and collaboration, our main argument being that most professional activities (including teaching and teacher education) are accomplished through talk. By studying the ways in which we interact, we can gain closer insights into professional practices and professional development.

In the session, we'll be demonstrating how, by using appropriate tools, classroom data, introspection and some kind of dialogue, practitioners can both improve their practices and make their teaching more enjoyable. By using actual data as empirical evidence and by focusing on the interactions which take place in any professional setting, we suggest how we might create active, engaged learning environments.

Our main concern is how to make professional development more dialogic and evidence-based. We'll be presenting a range of data taken from different teaching contexts and demonstrating how participants might research specific issues or puzzles in their own classes by using tools such as stimulated recall, self-evaluation checklists, peer review, lesson transcripts, 'snapshot' recordings, video interaction and guidance. We are especially interested in helping participants develop more dialogic approaches to their professional development by examining the value of talk as a means of generating new insights. By 'research' we mean systematic investigation which is evidence-based, but which can be accomplished in the course of normal teaching practices, but which may involve another professional.

We will cover a variety of contexts, including both language teaching and teacher-training perspectives.

The session will cover:

- Classroom observation
- Stimulated recall
- Using specialist frameworks
- Analysing classroom data
- Professional dialogue
- Promoting reflection

The session will consider the difference between researching professional talk and professional talk in research. We see this as a meaningful distinction and will offer suggestions for developing sensitivity in both areas. Most of this workshop will concern researching professional talk (i.e. classroom discourse). However, in terms of professional talk in research, we'll use examples of interview data to show how sensitivity to the co-construction of talk enables a richer situated understanding of practice.

The session will end with suggestions for a range of research questions that need further attention and a discussion of research opportunities that exist. The approach will be very 'hands-on' and we'll be making extensive use of audio and videotaped materials in addition to a range of 'tools' specifically designed for class-based research.

## Researching Professional Talk (Pre-conference Event)

**Date:** 8 April 2013
**Presenters:** Steve Walsh (Newcastle University) and Steve Mann (Warwick University)
**Location:** Liverpool, UK
**Booking** for this event is via the online conference booking form: https://secure.iatefl.org/registration/conf_reg_login.php

# Research SIG Day at the IATEFL Conference in Liverpool –

# Thursday 11th April 2013

**We have an excellent programme of speakers. Why not stay with us for the whole day?!**

**At least come to the Open Forum (the SIG's Annual Meeting), 14.45-15.30 in Hall 11a!**

**10.35-11.20 (Hall 11a)** Introduction to Research SIG Day, followed by **Introducing IRIS: a free, online resource for language teaching research**

Emma Marsden (University of York, UK)

*IRIS is a freely accessible, international database of materials that have been used to collect data for research into second language learning and teaching. We demonstrate the search and download facilities and review some of the content of IRIS, illustrating the kinds of research areas and data collection methods that could help teachers and students who are engaging in research.*

**11.20-11.55 Break**

**11.55-12.30 (Hall 11a) Mobigam: language on the move in Gujarat**

Richard Badger (University of Leeds, UK)
James Simpson (University of Leeds, UK)
Atanu Bhattacharya (Central University of Gujarat, India)
Sunil Shah (H.M. Patel Institute of English Training & Research, India)

*This presentation introduces the Mobigam project on the use of mobile technologies (e.g. mobile phones, tablets, game consoles) in language learning in Gujarat, India. The project involves a new partnership between a network of language teachers and researchers in India and the UK devoted to understanding how mobile technologies can be used in language learning.*

**12.30-13.00 (Hall 11a) Using Mixed Methods to Explore 'Ecologies of Schooling'**

Margaret Hawkins (University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA)

*Reporting on a mixed-methods study of schooling for immigrant students in non-gateway districts in the Midwestern United States, this paper delivers an analysis of circulating discourses and practices in educational settings, and reflects on ecologies of schooling through the lens of isolation. Discussion will include attention to study design and research approach and methods.*

**13.00-14.00 Lunch**

**14.00-14.30 (Hall 3a) Language Learning Histories in Teaching, Learning and Research**

Sarah Mercer (University of Graz, Austria)
David Nunan (Anaheim University, USA)

*Language learning histories provide rich data from the learner perspective and in learners' own voices. In this talk, we show how narratives can be useful for researchers, teachers and the learners themselves, and we discuss how using stories from and about learners places them where they should rightfully be - at the centre of the teaching and learning process.*

**14.45-15.30 (Hall 11a) Research SIG Open Forum**

*The annual meeting of SIG members and others interested in engaging with or in ELT research.*

**15.30-16.05 Break**

**16.05-16.50 (Hall 11a) Combining teaching, learning and research: an exploratory practice approach [Workshop]**

Ana Inés Salvi (University of Warwick, UK)
Yasmin Dar (University of Leicester, UK)
Judith Hanks (University of Leeds, UK)

*Practitioner research offers exciting opportunities for greater understanding of our classroom language learning lives. So why don't teachers and learners do more research? Using their experiences of Exploratory Practice in EAP contexts, the panel members will discuss ways in which both teachers and learners can integrate research with teaching and learning in their classrooms.*

**17.05-17.35 (Hall 11a) Growing as researchers: insider/outsider perspectives at work**

Sara Hannam (Oxford Brookes International, Oxford Brookes University, UK)
Radmila Popovic (SIT Graduate Institute / World Learning, USA)

*This interactive session engages audience members in discussion on the role of critical dialogic collaboration in research. We explore what it means to be an insider and outsider in a research process and in our understanding of a specific context (Serbia), and look at additional ways we enhanced each other's understanding in a partnership of practice and knowledge building.*

**17.50-18.20 (Hall 11a) Investigating the impact of action research: an Australian case study**

Fiona Barker (Cambridge English, UK) and Katherine Brandon (English Australia, Australia)

*Action research aims to enhance pedagogical practice and can be viewed as a type of professional development in which practitioners explore and address their own identified teaching challenges. This paper evaluates the impact of a national program in which teachers undertake investigations into their own classroom-based teaching within intensive English courses for overseas students.*

Institute of Modern Languages, State School of Higher Professional Education, Konin
Department of English Studies, Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts, Adam Mickiewicz University, Kalisz,
and
Institute of English Studies, Faculty of Philology , University of **Łódź,**
**in collaboration with IATEFL Research SIG**
(http://resig.iatefl.org)
are happy to announce a **3rd**
**International conference on classroom-oriented research**

# CLASSROOM-ORIENTED RESEARCH: RECONCILING THEORY AND PRACTICE

## Konin, October 14th-16th, 2013

## CALL FOR PAPERS

**THEME**
The conference will be devoted to various aspects of classroom-oriented research, focusing in particular on the ways in which theory, research and classroom practice can be successfully reconciled. The event will provide a forum for disseminating latest research findings in this area, which is of pivotal importance to foreign and second language pedagogy, and it will be of relevance not only to academics, researchers, teacher educators or material writers, but also to language teachers wishing to enhance their instructional practices.

**PLENARY SPEAKERS**
The following scholars have agreed to participate in the conference and deliver plenary talks:

- **Anne Burns** (Aston University)
- **Jean-Marc Dewaele** (Birkbeck College, University of London)
- **Diane Larsen-Freeman** (University of Michigan)
- **David Nunan** (Anaheim University)
- **Norbert Schmitt (**University of Nottingham)
- **David Singleton** (Trinity College, Dublin)
- **Paul Meara** (Swansea University)

**ABSTRACT SUBMISSION**
We welcome contributions related to the theme of the conference in the form of papers (20 minutes + 10 minutes for discussion), workshops (60 minutes) and posters which could, among other things, focus on the following areas:

- theoretical foundations of classroom-oriented research;
- teaching language skills and subsystems;
- developing intercultural competence in the language classroom;
- individual differences and language learning and teaching;
- learner autonomy and language learning strategies;
- classroom interaction and management;
- teachers' knowledge and beliefs;
- teacher education;
- coursebooks and materials;
- syllabus design;
- assessing second language knowledge;
- methodology of classroom-oriented research;
- disseminating the findings of classroom-oriented research.

Abstracts of papers, workshops and posters in the range of 250-300 words should be submitted by e-mail to classroomresearch2013@gmail.com by **May 31st, 2013**. The proposals should include the title, name, affiliation, e-mail address and a short biographical note, about 60-80 words in length. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by **June 30th, 2013**.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**
Queries regarding the event can be sent to classroomresearch2013@gmail.com or to Professor Mirosław Pawlak, Head of the Organizing Committee (pawlakmi@amu.edu.pl).