

**‘Research is for teachers? You
must be joking!’**

Richard Smith, University of Warwick

Linked resources:

bit.ly/researchisforteachers

Plan

1. Context: recent arguments and some history
2. Research which is *for* ELT practitioners
3. Teacher-research in ELT

Linked resources: bit.ly/researchisforteachers

1. Recent arguments and some history

Recent arguments

‘Research is largely irrelevant for teachers’ (Maley, Medgyes)

Do you ...

1. Strongly agree
 2. Agree more than disagree
 3. Neither agree nor disagree
 4. Disagree more than agree
 5. Strongly disagree
- ?







'Not all applied linguistic / educational research is relevant to teachers'

Do you ...

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree ?

[So,] certain kinds of research *are* relevant to teachers ...

Some history

THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY & TEACHING OF LANGUAGES

A REVIEW OF THE FACTORS AND PROBLEMS
CONNECTED WITH THE LEARNING AND
TEACHING OF MODERN LANGUAGES WITH
AN ANALYSIS OF THE VARIOUS METHODS
WHICH MAY BE ADOPTED IN ORDER TO
ATTAIN SATISFACTORY RESULTS

By

HAROLD E. PALMER

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

Harold E. Palmer (1878–1949)



'Scientism'

- Lots of complex jargon
- But also beginning of explicit attempts to solve problems through research
- Beginning of a 'scientific period' (Howatt & Smith)

Antecedents

DHI FONÈTIK TÏTCER

Dhi organ ov dhi fonètik tÏtcerz' asóciécon

édited bai PAUL PASSY

NEUILLY-SUR-SEINE (NIR PARIS) FRANS

10. Fèbruari 1887. (500 kopiz)

Líst of memberz for 1887.

Onereri prèzident: H. Sweet, púst prèzident ov dhi Filolòdjikal Sòsieti, London, Ingland.

Onereri memberz: Prof. J. Lundéll, Upsala, Sverige.

Prof. F. March, Easton, U. S. A.

Prof. F. Max Muller, Oxford, Ingland.

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Prof. E. Sievers, Tübingen, Deutschland.

Prof. J. Storm, Kristiania, Norge.

Prof. F. Thomsen, København, Danmark.

Prof. W. Victor, Marburg, Deutschland.

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Prèzident: P. Passy, Neuilly-sur-Seine, Franse.

Vais-Prèzidents: W. Maxton, 6, rue Vernier, Paris.

J. Martin, 2, rue Sainte-Hélène, Lyon, Franse.

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Tvèjurer: J. Bruce, 25 Avenue de l'Opéra, Paris.

Members (1); Kand. R. Arpi, Upsala, Sverige.

M^{rs} J. Blanc, 47 rue Denfert-Rochereau, Paris.

• R. Borge, 12 Via Gesù-Maria, Roma, Italia.

Dr. K. Brekke, Industrigate 23, Kristiania, Norge.

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M^{rs} E. Diény, 8 rue Labordère, Neuilly-sur-Seine.

• F. Dollé, 128 rue d'Assas, Paris.

Rektor Dörr, Solingen, Deutschland.

C. E. Dormer, Lower Edmonton, London N., Ingland.

• Pres. Marshall Elliot, Jon Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md., U. S. A.

R. Fourès, 18 rue Brézin, Paris.

Rev. A. Gary, Neuilly-sur-Seine.

• J. Gounelle, 62 rue Monge, Paris.

• Rev. C. E. Greig, 40 Boulevard de Reuilly, Paris.

Dr. A. Hamilton, Toronto, Canada.

• Dr. S. Hedland, Göteborg, Sverige.

C. Ivatts, 60 Avenue de la Grande-Armée, Paris.

(1) Aktiv-memberz markt •.

• O. Jespersen, Ole Suhrsgade 18, København, Danmark.

• Dr. H. Klinghart, Reichenbach in Solchesjen, Deutschland.

Dr. K. Kühn, Karstrasse 9, Wiesbaden, Deutschland.

J. Limousin, 64 rue d'Alésia, Paris.

• G. Montourcy, 66 Av. Philippe-Auguste, Paris.

J. Macrae, Hotel de Londres, Menton.

Dr. C. Mortet, 3 rue Labordère, Neuilly-sur-Seine.

H. Motte, 94 rue de Lonchamps, Neuilly-sur-Seine.

M^{me} H. Motta, Neuilly-sur-Seine.

M^{rs} A. Mühlbacher, 14 rue de Varenne, Paris.

Prof. A. Norraen, Upsala, Sverige.

Dr. B. Olsen, Reikjavík, Island.

Kand. F. Palmgren, Upsala, Sverige.

Jacques Passy, Neuilly-sur-Seine, Franse.

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Dr. Bambeau, Moltkestrasse 11, [Hamburg, Deutschland.

Dr. Rhode, Lübban i. L., Deutschland.

• M^{me} E. Saglier, Enghien, Seine-et-Oise, Franse.

• Abbé Serres, 7 rue de l'Arcade, Paris.

J. Thorkelsson, Sölugade 22, København.

P. Thorkelsson, Reikjavík, Island.

Dr. J. de Vries Van Donsburgh, Dordrecht, Nederland.

M. Waltar, Realschule, Kassel, Deutschland.

A. Western, Fredrikstad, Norge.

G. Zoga, Reikjavík, Island.

Korespondens (1).

From Dr. Klinghardt. — Dhi niu prógram ov dhi F. T. A. iz kwait fòrst-rét. For mai

(1) Som ov aur korespondents ták grét péna tu réit dhi smól kápital N as wi print it. Thankin dhem, wi wud sé that N is eil a mæk-sift for Mr. Pitman's sein, hwitc iz not found in aur printin-étis. In skript, wi óives yús dhi fonètipik lèter (an órdinari a wíth a tál), hwitc aur printer néé wot end trans-litèréta bai N.



According to Palmer (1917), why is there a need for a new 'science of language teaching' involving research?

“ce n'est pas la méthode qui nous manque; ce qui nous manque c'est la base même de la méthode”
(Palmer 1917)

(“it is not 'method' that we lack; what we lack is a *basis for method*” (my translation))

“no one programme can possibly be ideally suitable for all classes of students; hence, in addition to the Standard Programme that we have ... described, we must be prepared to draw up Special Programmes’ (Palmer 1917: 16)

‘Scientific method’, according to Palmer (1917: 20):

(a) To collect isolated facts and factors in such numbers as to cover the whole field of inquiry.

(b) To classify, examine, and correlate them.

(c) To draw from them certain conclusions upon which the fundamental principles may be established and stated in categoric terms.

(d) To confirm and justify these principles by putting them to the test of actual and continual practice.

As a language teacher in Belgium, Palmer ...

“explored the possibilities of one method after another, both as teacher and student. He would devise, adopt, modify or reject one plan after another as the result of further research and experience in connexion with many languages – living and artificial.”

The Institute for Research in English Teaching, Tokyo (founded 1923)

1



Michael West (1888–1973)



Some influences on post-war ELT

Post-World War II applied linguistics

The tradition of practical experimentation /
experience theorized

was met by ...

‘linguistics applied’ (audiolingualism etc.)

- 1970s Applied Linguistics in the UK:
 - a ‘golden age’ of practice–theory linkage, mediated by the British Council → CLT ?

- now grown apart (again), while ‘problems’ are bigger and wider

2009–2013 project: British Council

Directory of UK ELT research

Research

For the purposes of this exercise, we took the primary meaning of ‘research’ to be original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. However, the term also includes scholarship, for example in forms such as dictionaries, research databases and reviews of the ‘state of the art’ in areas relevant to ELT.

‘ELT research’ was defined as referring to any research whose data and/or findings relate directly to the teaching, learning or assessment of English as a Foreign, Second or Additional Language in the UK or any other context.

Some overall findings

- There's more than you might expect
- Much of it done into testing / by Cambridge Assessment/CRELLA
- Cf. materials – done by publishers
- Language research -> grammars, dictionaries – not included
- Not much into EYL
- Not much into developing countries exc. PhDs
- Quite a lot of qualitative research
- Not much teacher-research

On 'mediation' and 'open access' as ways to bridge the gap

- Recorded keynotes - TESOLacademic
- Summaries - ELT Research bites. (cf. *Language Teaching* in the past)
- Blogs – e.g. Scott Thornbury; Geoff Jordan; Shona Whyte
- Increasing number of open access journals / articles / chapters

From research into a more accessible form for teachers ('mediating' from theory to practice)

2. Research *for* ELT practitioners ('ELT research')

Taking the notion of 'ELT research' further – building more of a focus on practitioners' concerns into the stages of research prior to dissemination

,

- British Council ELTREP awards – publications
- British Council award for MA dissertation with greatest potential for impact
- Research agendas (e.g. for British Council, for TESOL)

‘ELT research’ could be (re)defined more radically as ‘research which is planned, carried out and/or disseminated with (active and equal) engagement of ELT practitioners’, e.g.:

- in formulating research issues and questions
 - in planning data collection approaches
 - in analysing data
 - in interpreting the findings
- as well as in sharing the research

e.g. in the context of ...

- Researcher–teacher collaborations
- University/Training college–school partnerships
- Teacher association research
- Encouragement of teacher-research via existing and new networks

3. Teacher-research in ELT

One possible form of ELT research

bit.ly/telcnet-home

TEL.C (Teaching English in Large Classes) Network

HOME WHO WE ARE PRESENTATIONS PUBLICATIONS RESOURCES NETWORKING QUESTIONNAIRE

TELC Home

Network rationale
Large class size is a challenge faced by many teachers and learners around the world and is a particular issue in many 'developing' countries where teacher recruitment has not kept pace with rapid increases in school enrolments. Investigations of large class size and other challenges involved in teaching in 'difficult circumstances' constitute the focus of our concern as a research network.

Aims
The TELC research network (set up on the initiative of Dr Fauzia Shamim and Dr Richard Smith in 2008) has the following major aims:

- To share and disseminate good practice relating to teaching in large classes / teaching in otherwise 'under-

facebook.com/groups/telcgroup/

Teaching English in Large Classes (TELC)

78 members (2 new) · Invite by Email

Write something...

RECENT POSTS

Krishna Kalyan Dixit
Just a quick thought on large classes. I work in a university affiliated college in Central India. According to the government norms 120 is the limit for each class. Usually about 70+ students attend classes. Before, I came to know about the notion of large class I never noticed it. For me and my colleagues it was just taken for granted like air. Even today, most of my colleagues are not at all aware of large classes. In fact, when there are fewer students in class (on account of bad weather or some festival) we find it really difficult to teach.

Like · Comment · Follow Post · Yesterday at 5:35am

Seen by 11

View 3 more comments

Krishna Kalyan Dixit Thanks a lot Richard for your response. Not sure what my colleagues think but for me a class with fewer students doesn't look like a normal class. I have to talk less louder (which means I have to be conspicuous all the time), can't do anything or... See How 9 hours ago · Like

Krishna Kalyan Dixit Just forgot to add a point related to question one. Small number changes the dynamics of classroom routine when one has to operate in traditional transmission mode. And the institutions expect the same from teachers. 9 hours ago · Like

Write a comment...

facebook.com/groups/telcgroup/



Photo © Christopher Tribble, 2004



Photo © Christopher Tribble, 2004







Photo © Christopher Tribble, 2004





Photo © Christopher Tribble, 2004



‘ELT research’ can be (re)defined more radically as ‘research which is planned, carried out and/or disseminated with the (active and equal) engagement of ELT practitioners’, e.g.:

- In formulating research issues and questions
- In planning data collection approach
- In analysing data
- In interpreting the findings
- In sharing the research

Teacher-research

'Teacher-research' =

'research initiated and carried out by teachers into issues of importance to them in their own work' / ''research done by teachers into issues which concern them'

'Addressing questions that arise from your practice by gathering data, analysing it, and sharing what you find'

Possibility of teacher-research

‘Doing teacher-research is not possible for most teachers’

Do you ...

1. Strongly agree
 2. Agree more than disagree
 3. Neither agree nor disagree
 4. Disagree more than agree
 5. Strongly disagree
- ?







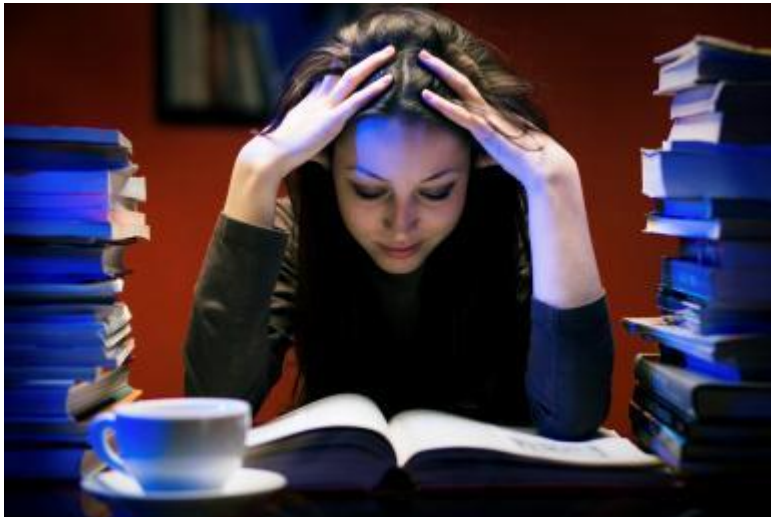
Images of research



Images of research



Images of research



Teacher-research ...

can usefully be supported by universities, teacher associations, new networks etc. → *mentoring* of teacher-research

But with appropriate definitions, images and *models* of research

Definitions of research

Research is ...

‘a process of inquiry consisting of three [...] components: (1) a question, problem, or hypothesis, (2) data, (3) analysis and interpretation of data’ (Nunan 1992)

‘the organized, systematic search for answers to the questions we ask’ (Hatch and Lazaraton 1991: 1)

‘systematic enquiry made public’ (Stenhouse 1975)

Share a concern with students ('How can I/we?')

And ask for their opinions – 5 minutes' anonymous writing at the end of the class.

Or just ask them for general 'good points' and 'points to improve' about the lessons.

Categorize responses and make improvements on this basis

Is this research? Is it useful research?

Does it need to be shared more widely / have more general relevance?

Does it seem feasible?

A better
image of
research?



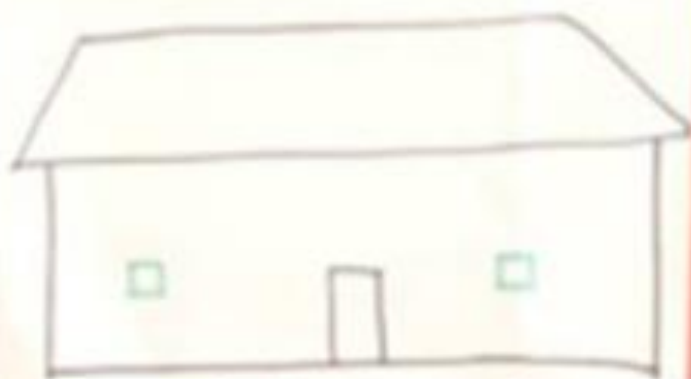








But 2 teachers remain absent.
The classes become noisy if I go
on attending one class to the other



- ① How to handle two classes at one time?
- ② How to cope when no partition?

- Teacher should find out the reason why the students are noisy and uninterested in activity. He should adopt such kind of activity which are interesting, innovative, fun and according to the level of the students.

- As the number of students are less...

From where can we
take help?
① Teachers from other schools
② experienced teachers
③ Organized workshop

- * The steps how we
 - Discussed among
 - Took suggestions
 - Took suggestions from
 - We compiled the

Solutions:

- Engage the different
eg. If one class is
classes will be busy
- For grammar class
together and engage
- Warmers at the
be suitable for
- Bright students

Teaching in low-resource classrooms: voices of experience

Edited by Richard Smith, Amol Padwad and Deborah Bullock



The Champion Teachers project in Chile (2013+)

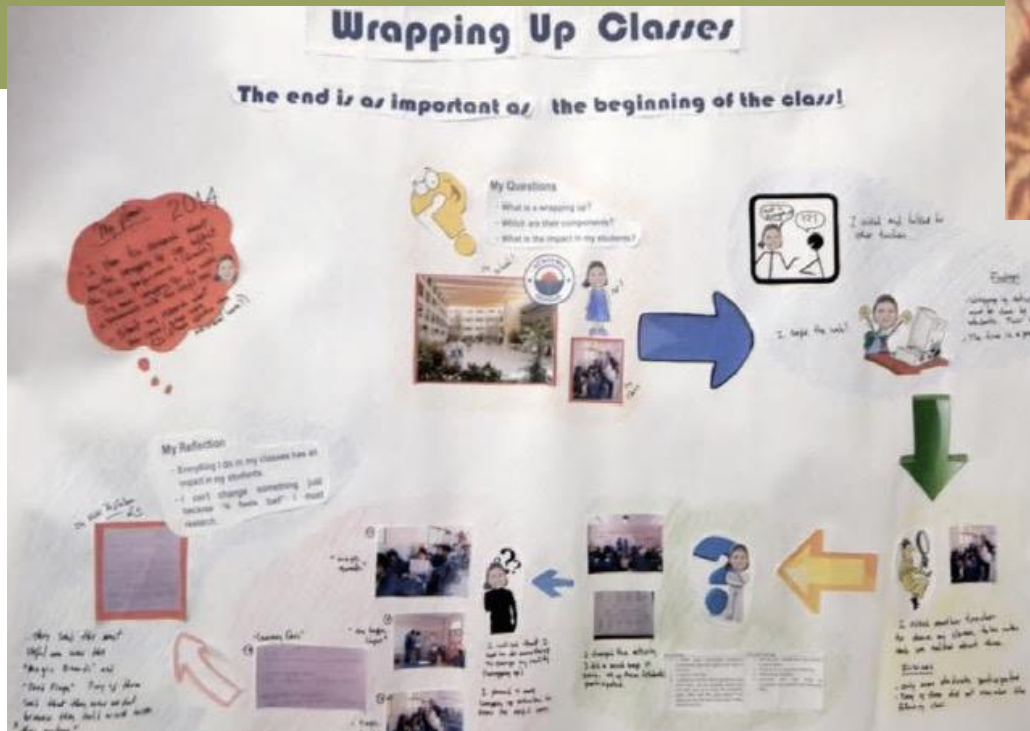
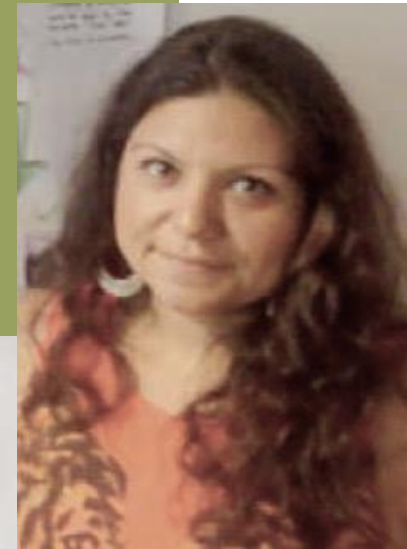


Exploratory action research

1

Wrapping up classes

Andrea Robles López
Iquique, Chile



Some facts about teachers!

- Teachers work 40 – 44 hours per week and have limited time to plan.
- Teachers need to manage many things at the same time (sometimes many jobs!).
- Teachers teach large classes (40-45 Ss) per class.
- Teachers think research is something only scholars and professors do.



Andrea's research...

Wrapping up classes, the end is as important as the beginning of the class!

- Her Context...
 - High school class
 - 40 – 42 students per class

Andrea's puzzle

Is she wrapping up her lessons effectively?

Step 1:

She decided to find out the answer...

1. What is a wrapping up?
2. What are the characteristics of a wrapping up?
3. How do her students react in that part of the class?

Step 2:

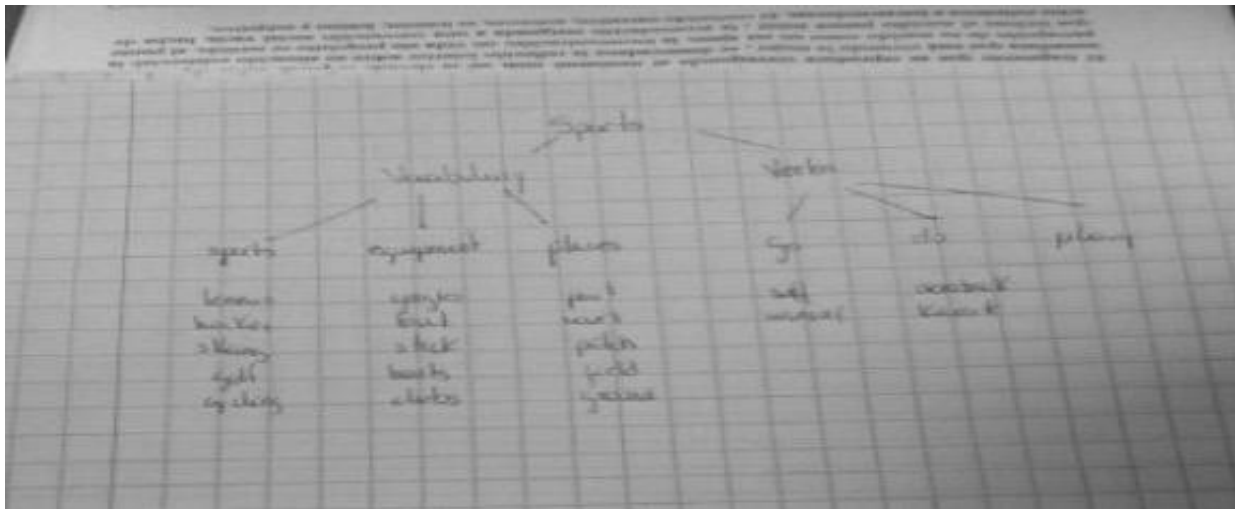
- She asked some colleagues about wrapping up.
- She surfed the web for answers.
- She asked a colleague to observe her class.
- She made a parallel of what she was doing and her ideal wrapping up.

WHAT DID SHE FIND OUT?

- Her colleagues and she had the same thoughts about wrapping up 😊
- The article on the web also confirmed her ideas 😊
- There was a huge difference between what she was doing and what she thought was right.
- Every time she repeated the same question at the end of the class, her students packed their things to leave 😞
- She had to do something about it

Step 3: Action

- She decided to try a different activity and see what happened.



Step 4

- Come back to step 2... 😊

- She asked some colleagues about wrapping up.
- She surfed the web for answers.
- She asked a colleague to observe her class.
- She made a parallel of what she was doing and her ideal wrapping up.

Step 5:

- Think of and plan different activities as wrapping up.



lo que aprendí...
A usar los modal verbs y las Future Forms

No me puedo dar...
los "listening" y la pronunciación

me gustaría aprender...
ver películas en inglés y más vocabulario

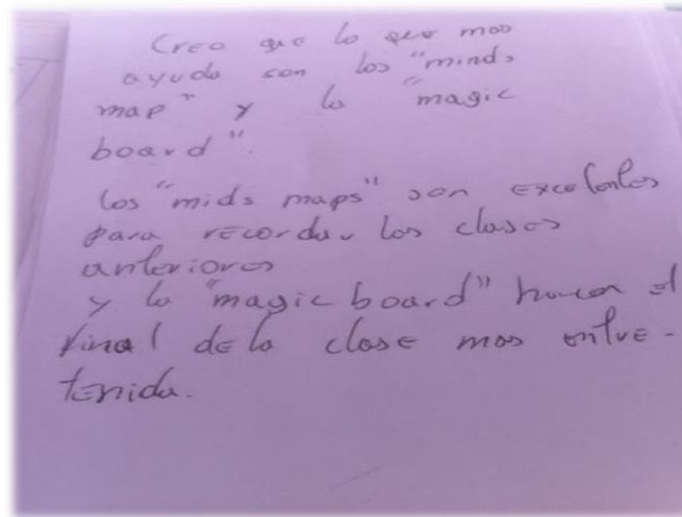
Step 6

- Come back to step 2 😊

- She asked some colleagues about wrapping up.
- She surfed the web for answers.
- She asked a colleague to observe her class.
- She made a parallel of what she was doing and her ideal wrapping up.

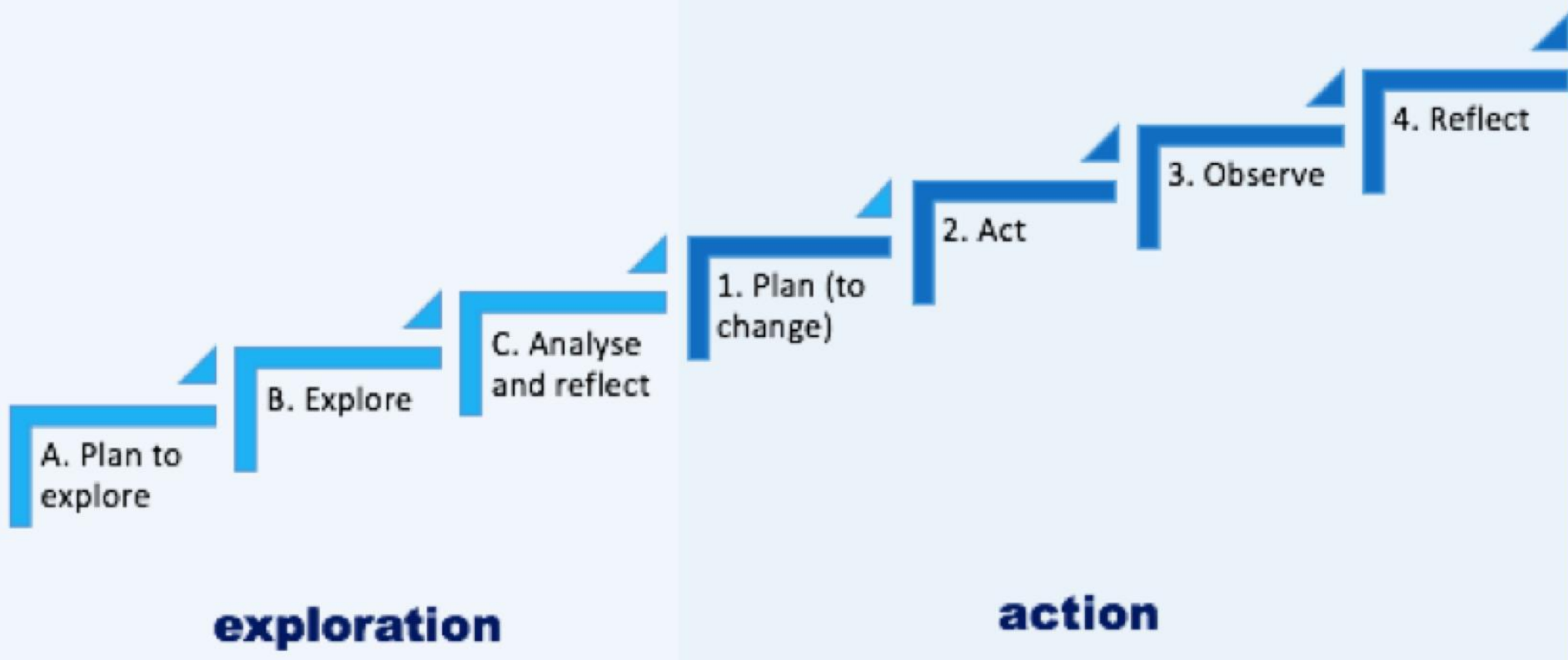
Step 7

- Asked her students about the activities



Andrea's reflections

- Discovering is more important than solving a problem.
- Teaching is learning!
- Teachers are powerful.
- Research helps you to know why you are doing something and not just acting because of a feeling.
- Research is not only for experts... teachers have much more things to say because we are the ones who are inside the classroom.
- Accept that we make mistakes or maybe we do not do thing in the best way...





'My research journey started with a feeling, just a feeling that something wasn't right. Going from that feeling to asking why, and finding out what works is the key.'

Action research is important because it lights a spark in the darkness of the system; it lights a spark in the mentality of the people who do not want to change; and it lights a spark in the school by making people believe that they own the changes that can be made in any learning environment.'



We need to stop focusing on our concerns and pay more attention to our students' concerns. As a result of this project, I feel that I am more empathetic'



*I heard my
students.
I saw myself*



Champion Teachers: stories of exploratory action research

Edited by Paula Rebolledo, Richard Smith and Deborah Bullock

Find more
Exploratory Action
Research stories here



Spread to other schemes

CT – Peru

AARMS – India

AARMS – Nepal

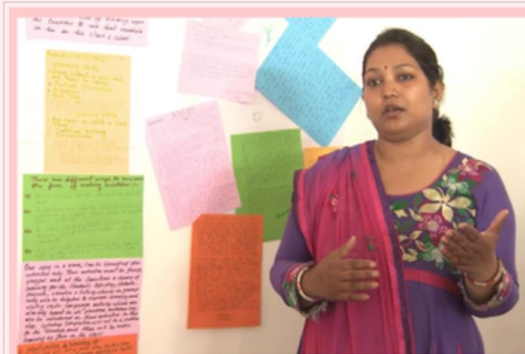
Forthcoming:

Richard Smith & Paula Rebolledo: *A Handbook for Exploratory Action Research* (British Council)

Electronic Village Online (EVO) 2018

Classroom-based Research for Professional Development EVO

[HOME](#) [EVO2017](#)



**CLASSROOM-BASED RESEARCH FOR
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

We started EVO2017 on 9th January 2017 and ended on 13th February 2017. There were also some final presentations by participants in April 2017. Until we start registering participants for the follow-up EVO2018 (probably in November 2017), you are welcome to browse the 2017 materials by clicking on the links below.

This **EVO Project**, led by a **team of ten volunteer teacher educators and supported by several teacher associations**, provided a hands-on introduction to inquiry-based teacher development, especially (though not exclusively) for teachers working in difficult circumstances (large classes, low-resource classrooms,

etc.). The five-week workshop took participants through different stages of teacher-research, engaging them in practical activities to gradually build their confidence in teacher-research. There are further details below



Teachers Research! Istanbul 2017

Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul

2–3 June 2017



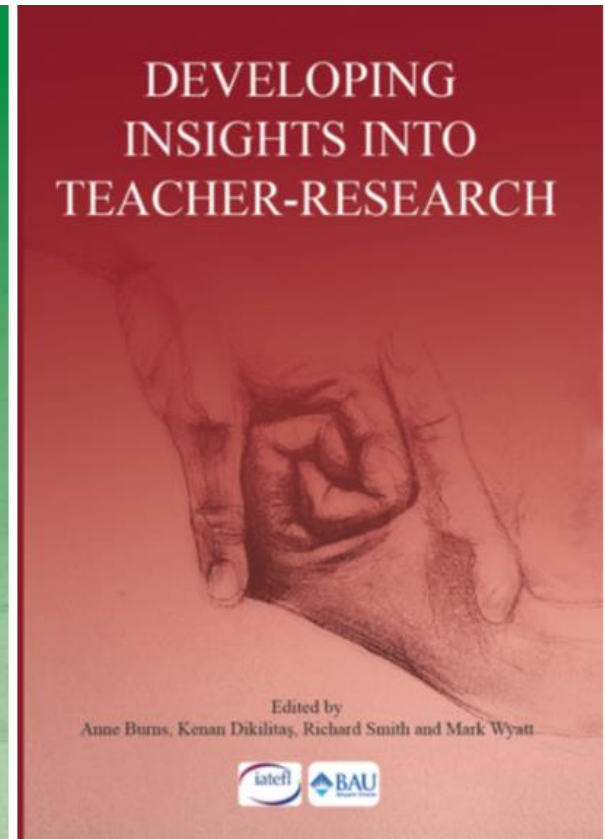
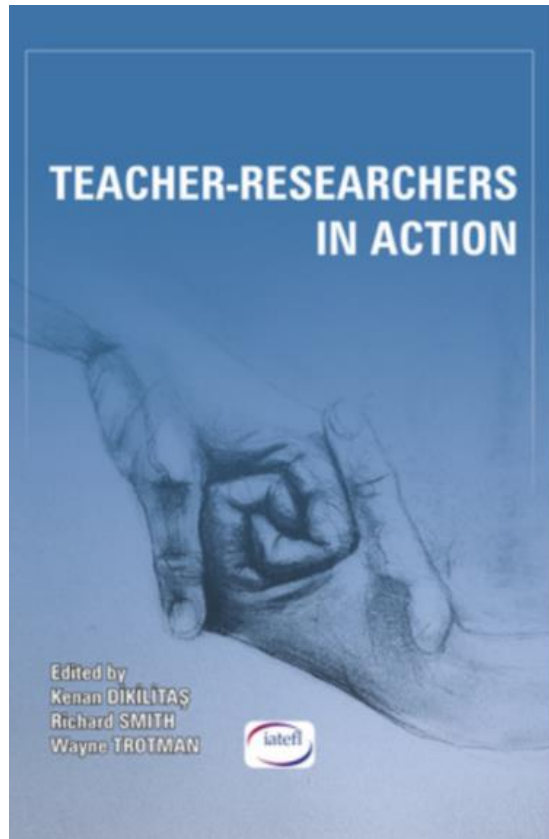
- Innovative publishing (cf. Smith, Rebolledo, Bullock, Robles article)

Teachers research! Facebook group

The image is a screenshot of the Facebook group 'Teachers Research!'. The group is public and has 2,813 members. The interface shows a navigation menu on the left with options like Discussion, Members, Events, Videos, Photos, Files, Group Insights, and Manage Group. A search bar is present for finding content within the group. The main content area features a discussion post with a photo of four people in a meeting, a 'Write something...' prompt, and options to add photos, videos, or live videos. Below this is a pinned post by Richard Smith, an administrator, sharing a link to a video and written summary of a teacher-research event. On the right side, there are sections for 'ADD MEMBERS' with a search input, 'MEMBERS' with a list of member avatars, and 'SUGGESTED MEMBERS' with 'Add Member' buttons for several individuals.

facebook.com/groups/teachersresearch/

resig.iatefl.org/publications



trfestival.wordpress.com

The International Festival of Teacher-Research in ELT

Face-to-face and online events promoting teacher-research as an empowering means of professional development for English teachers working in difficult circumstances worldwide

ABOUT · **UPCOMING EVENTS** ▾ · EVENTS SO FAR ▾ · RESOURCES ▾ · STEERING COMMITTEE ·
SUPPORTERS · CONTACT · FESTIVAL FAQS

14–15 September – AINET International
Teacher Research Conference,
Nagpur, India

🔍 Search

Search ...



The first ever ELT Teacher-research Conference in India is being organised by the [All-India Network of English Teachers \(AINET\)](#) in collaboration with G. S. College of Commerce & Economics, [Nagpur](#) and with the support of the British Council, Regional English

Language Office, US Embassy, and IATEFL Research SIG. Teachers in schools, colleges and other institutions will share their studies and participate in an international exchange of ideas, experiences and developments in teacher-

Possibility of teacher-research

‘Doing teacher-research is possible for me’

Do you ...

1. Strongly agree
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- ?

