Stories by Teacher Researchers in an Online Research Community

Aslı Lidice Göktürk Sağlam
and Kenan Dikilitaş

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Edited by Aslı Lidice Gokturk Saglam and Kenan Dikilitaş

IATEFL Research Special Interest Group

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Classroom-based Research for Professional Development:

Stories by Teacher Researchers of an Online Research Community

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Foreword

Richard Smith

University of Warwick, England

As they explain in their Introduction, Aslı Lidice Göktürk Sağlam and Kenan Dikilitaş designed the first Classroom-based Research EVO (Electronic Village Online) in 2016, hoping to introduce teachers around the world to the benefits of teacher-research by means of a specially constructed collaborative online learning environment. For reasons they mention, this was an innovative development, taking advantage of web 2.0 technology to extend and promote ideas of research by teachers for teachers to a much greater range of contexts than had been hitherto reached. From being a minority pursuit, it seemed that teacher-research was 'taking off' in the field of TESOL, having also been strongly focused on since around 2012 by IATEFL's Research SIG (ReSIG) in a series of events, in particular the Teachers Research! conferences (2013 onwards) in which Kenan had himself already played a leading role. Kenan and Aslı built on contacts formed within this developing network to secure the support of other moderators internationally, and they also gained ReSIG backing for the use of IATEFL's Adobe Connect platform for their EVO webinars.

Richard Smith, from the UK, has been a teacher educator for more than twenty years, the last seventeen of them in the UK at the University of Warwick. He is the co-founder and coordinator of the Teaching English in Large Classes network (TELCnet) and outreach coordinator / former overall coordinator of the IATEFL Research SIG. He has published widely on topics ranging from teacher-research to the history of language learning and teaching, and has worked with teachers from many countries, both directly and as academic adviser to several teacher-research mentoring schemes in Latin America and South Asia. For his publications and other information see http://warwick.ac.uk/richardcsmith

At this time, there were also, for the first time, some relatively large-scale teacher-research mentoring schemes being developed for school teachers in Latin America (the 'Champion Teachers' programme) and South Asia (AARMS), and the idea of 'teacher association research' was being taken forward in Cameroon.

Knowing of my involvement in these schemes, and aware that many of the EVO2016 participants had been teachers working in relatively 'difficult' circumstances, that is, in low-resource settings, often in large classes, in developing country contexts, Kenan and Aslı approached me and asked if I'd like to take the lead in designing the following year's EVO. I happily accepted, seeing this as an opportunity to trial and spread further some of the ideas for relatively practicable, down-to-earth forms of teacher-research for professional development which had been emerging from work with colleagues in Chile (Paula Rebolledo), India (Amol Padwad) and Cameroon (Harry Kuchah), in particular.

As a consequence, EVO2017 was designed according to the principles I will now describe, and this design was largely maintained intact for the EVO2018 experience from which the projects reported on in this book originate. Firstly, it is important to mention that the main goal of both EVOs has been to foster teacher-learner autonomy – teachers' ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes for themselves as teachers, and to evaluate and continuously develop their teaching into the future. We have been focusing, then, on professional learning, development and *empowerment*, more than on participants satisfying external, academic quality criteria. For me, the most interesting and moving parts of the stories shared in this collection are therefore the final reflections on personal / professional learning which Kenan and Aslı have asked each writer to provide – proof, it seems to me, that the EVO has largely achieved the goal, at least in these cases, of showing how teacher-research can be 'a powerful engine to continue […] professional development' (Giulia Bertagnolio Licio, chapter 2), providing 'more space for feedback and understanding students' learning' (*ibid.*) as well as often engaging students and so making them more aware as well (*ibid.*).

We aimed to achieve the goal of empowerment, firstly, by building a good atmosphere and developing confidence through validation of teachers' own contexts and of their existing strengths. The first 'induction' week and the first week of actual tasks (explained further in the Introduction) were, indeed, given over entirely to this affective side of things, with careful step by step instructions being provided for use of the various platforms, over-complex applications being avoided, and self-introductions by mentors and participants being promoted. Importantly, the first tasks involved getting participants to share photos and descriptions of their classrooms, and to share a recent *successful* experience. These activities were based on what we had come to call an 'Enhancement Approach' (examples of this were shared with participants particularly from the British Council publication *Teaching in Low-resource Classrooms: Voices of Experience* and associated video materials).

Secondly, as we moved into sharing of problems, associated research questions, corresponding research methods, and means of analysis, our watchwords were jargon-free explanation, *exploration* before action and identification of research methods which would not interfere too much with teaching. Here, both the overall approach (Exploratory Action Research, sometimes abbreviated as 'EAR' in participants' accounts in this volume) and the illustrations we provided were from the Champion Teachers programme in Chile, as exemplified and explained in the British Council e-books *Champion Teachers: Stories of Exploratory Action Research* and (for EVO2018) the *Handbook for Exploratory Action Research*.

Finally, means of sharing were also made as participant-friendly as possible, with no pressure being exerted for submission of a written report but instead online oral presentation slots being provided for those able to take advantage of them.

Aslı, in particular, had many innovative suggestions on how participants could share their work online, and this book extends this aspect of the EVO experience, building on the model first established by the ReSIG publication *Teachers Research!* in linking readable written accounts with, in several cases, extra material including the web-pages we created to showcase participants' final oral presentations: http://classroombasedresearch.weebly.com/outcomes2.html (2017) and http://classroombasedresearch.weebly.com/outcomes.html (2018).

The enormous amount of voluntary effort put into the construction of this EVO experience in 2016, 2017 and 2018 – and mention should be made here of the work put in by mentors as well as the commitment of moderators and participants themselves – seems to have been commonly agreed to be an investment well worth making, being repaid in full by the benefits in terms of *learning* for all who participated. Aslı and Kenan put this poetically when they say (in their Introduction) that the EVO experience represents for them a kind of 'magical window' into a rich diversity of settings. They – and all the contributors to the EVO and to this volume – deserve thanks and congratulations for showing how important it is, in the face of the competitive, constraining, precarious educational environments that we sometimes seem to inhabit, to create professional development spaces, like the EVO, for nurturing solidarity, autonomy, and hope among teachers worldwide.

Building an online research community: The Classroom-based Research for Professional Development EVO, 2016–2018

Kenan Dikilitas,
Bahcesehir University, Turkey

Aslı Lidice Gokturk Saglam,
Ozyegin University, Turkey

Background to EVO

Classroom-based Research for Professional Development is a TESOL EVO (Electronic Village Online) supported online teacher development programme which aims to offer language teachers worldwide a series of classroom research tasks, open access resources, collaborative learning opportunities, and interaction-based mentoring. We began this initiative in 2016, when we first began to wonder how we could offer research training online. While discussing options we came across the annual Electronic Village Online, which was itself established in 2000 as a special project of TESOL's CALL Interest Section. This enables educators to design and implement various programmes, offering the opportunity of using various online platforms for bringing together participants and encouraging them to interact and discuss. Consequently, we designed an online and open source programme within the EVO in 2017.

Kenan Dikilitas is an Associate Professor at Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul. His academic and research interests include language teacher education and professional development through research engagement. He has published his work in books and international journals. His recent book publications include Developing Teacher autonomy through Action Research co-authored with C.Griffiths (2017) and Developing insights into teacher research edited with A.Burns, R. Smith, and M.Wyatt, (2017).

Aslı Lidice Gokturk Saglam, from Turkey, has been an English teacher in EAP settings for 15 years. She hold a PhD in language testing and assessment. She is an educational technologies enthusiast. Her research interests include; teacher education, educational technology, and testing and assessment.

With 3 other moderators, we brought together 212 participants from geographically dispersed educational contexts around the idea of engaging in a hands-on introduction to inquiry-based teacher development in an online community of practice. The following year, we invited Richard Smith to design the EVO, and there were 331 participants actively engaging in weekly tasks, guided by 10 moderators, while in 2018 there were 214 teachers and 24 moderators. Today, the Facebook group of Classroom-based Research EVO comprises more than 1400 participants. This project has had the official support of several teacher associations, including All-India Network of English Teachers (AINET), IATEFL Research SIG, Red de Investigadores Chilenos (RICELT), and Teaching English in Large Classes network (TELCnet)

Locating teachers at the centre of the learning process, this online community encourages its participants to reflect, research and review their classroom practices and interaction with students. Every year, teachers from diverse geographical and educational settings come together for 5 weeks through asynchronous (Facebook groups, Google Plus community and Web 2.0 tools) and synchronous mediums (webinars in Adobe). As a result, they are able to   deepen their knowledge about teacher research by exploring open-source links and engaging in weekly activities and tasks. Cooperating with a team of volunteer mentors, lead moderators designed the content and materials for classroom research for the 2016, 2017, and 2018 sessions, and coordinated the sessions, as well as online platforms.

This edited book is a product of the latest EVO, which was offered in 2018, but draws on work that has been in progress since 2016. The programme evolves each year, with new moderators, the development of online materials, and diversification of online links to relevant contents offered regarding teacher research.

The Programme Structure

The programme lasts 6 weeks: 5 weeks of input sessions and a final week for the dissemination session. Input sessions offer knowledge about what classroom research is, how to engage in, and what might be gains from such project, while the dissemination session showcases the participant outcomes.

(See classroombasedresearch.weebly.com/outcomes).

Input Sessions

The input sessions are delivered by programme leaders, who deliver five one-hour sessions with the teachers on the research engagement process, offering basic and essential research knowledge. Each session is based on a certain theme, as shown in the figure below:

1. Introduction and stepping into research for teacher development	2. Identifying a focus of research and developing research questions	3. Practical tools for exploratory research

4. Analyzing and interpreting data	5. Sharing research

Figure 1. Themes for Classroom-Based Research for Professional Development EVO in 2018

Online research mentoring

The online research mentors interact online (asynchronously) with the teachers and provide dialogue-driven, constructive feedback on their research topics, research questions, designs, and reflection. Each mentor works with teachers in groups, with group size depending on the numbers in the programme. Moderation responsibilities include facilitating involvement of the teachers in the community of practitioners, monitoring progress, and giving feedback on research plans. The online research mentoring tasks involve the following four steps:

1. Welcoming the teachers and getting to know them
2. Offering constructive feedback on their initial research ideas through asynchronous mentoring
3. Sustaining continuous rapport with them during the course
4. Encouraging them to give and get feedback to maximize interaction

The support provided by the mentors is an important factor in the success of the project since they offer critical feedback, and can clarify areas where teachers are in particular need of help.

Constructing the community of teacher researchers

One week before starting, we invite the teachers to our online platforms. This helps to sustain interaction with mentors and among the teacher researchers, an initial step in constructing the identity of a group gathered for similar purposes, but bringing diverse pedagogical knowledge from various classroom contexts worldwide. We employ the following online platforms in the programme:

Facebook
Participants are invited to a Facebook group where they can socialize and introduce themselves, their classrooms and contexts. This platform does not require the teachers to discuss their research plans, but simply let others know who they are and where they are from. This, we believe, can help establish bonds among the teachers and strengthen rapport during the project. So, this platform is important in contributing to the initial motivation needed, and in maintaining connections within the group.

Google+
The other platform we employ is Google+, which is where teachers and online research mentors meet. Teachers introduce themselves and their teaching contexts. They are also encouraged to share visuals of their classrooms. This allows mentors to become familiar with the group. In the initial weeks, this platform is mainly used to generate online written discussion about classroom context, research topics, and interests. Then, with mentor help, teachers are encouraged to think about how to develop research plans.

Adobe Connect
This platform, whose cost has been covered by the IATEFL Research SIG (resig.weebly.com), is used to deliver the online input sessions. It is a video and audio enhanced online platform which allows participants to contribute via a chat box, and to talk and video themselves. This is the medium via which teachers and mentors gather to discuss and interact synchronously during the sessions.

Website
In the first year we used the platform provided by TESOL EVO to share the syllabus, including the content and materials, and to introduce the leaders of the live sessions and the online research moderators. From 2017 this was largely replaced by a purpose-built website in weebly.com (classroombasedresearch.weebly.com)

As an online programme conducted through the above platforms and tools Classroom-based Research for Professional Development overcame many of the limitations of traditional teacher research mentoring initiatives conducted with small numbers of teachers on site. This programme reached a much larger number of teachers through interactive and collaborative platforms. Primary, secondary and tertiary teachers from around the globe were able to gather into a virtual space devoted to teacher research, and were able to work on the course content at their own pace under the supervision of the online mentors. This web-based mentoring initiative also facilitated research engagement of teachers working in relatively difficult circumstances, as explained in Richard Smith's Foreword.

In each chapter of the present book, the aim of teacher research is the improvement of students' learning, since the teachers prioritized improvement of classroom interaction and students' performance. The book also provides evidence for enhancement of possibilities of international teacher research collaboration through online communities of practice. Thus, all chapters highlight the concept of 'collaboration', not only between mentors and mentees, but also with learners and among participating teachers from all around the world. During this online collaboration-based initiative, which emphasised research by teachers for teachers, we were able to witness the transformative potential of teacher research as a professional development strategy.

Through collaboration and cooperation within the research community, our participants had the opportunity to build confidence in teacher-research, leading to the publication of their research reports. We were able to gain an awareness of the challenges faced in classes around the world, and we were exposed to the wide range of puzzles that our colleagues face.

Offering online training into research through online communities of practice is indicative of future possibilities for international collaboration and wider accessibility. We feel that this project acted as a magical window opening onto a mesmerizingly colourful world of diverse educational settings. We hope that you enjoy the inspirational view, which portrays an enhancement of international and wider teacher-research engagement, and be encouraged to join (and create) similar communities when undertaking your own investigations.

Writing Up

As the project has been implemented for three consecutive years, we wanted to disseminate the accumulated experience and encouraged the teachers to write up their research. We sent out a call to all participants in June 2018, inviting them to share their research. Several teachers who had presented their research during the programme's live round-up webinar expressed interest in writing up their research. Eventually, 10 participants in the programme who had carried out at least part of their research provided contributions, which, following editing, are presented in this book. Links, realia from the research context and occasional videos accompany the write-ups in this e-book, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the background and findings.

Final Remarks

EVO has been an initiative offered to teachers from different disciplines across the world to encourage the concept of research by teachers themselves. It functioned as a community of practice where teachers were supported by their mentors and colleagues who were not physically present. This distance, however, in no way posed an obstacle to focusing on the research task development or interaction among researchers and teachers.

On the contrary, it helped teachers establish new connections with potential for further development. The project helped the participating teachers go beyond their immediate educational environment and discover new insights in their professions, such as what and how others teach, how others view learners and teachers, as well as what other kinds of research activities they themselves could conduct in their own classroom. The experience was in the form of inter-pedagogic collaboration, where teachers have the opportunity to learn both implicitly from other teachers, and explicitly through task engagement with mentors. The concept also implies the joint thinking through diverse teaching and learning experiences in different cultures and geographies. The interaction with peers and mentors was prolonged and systematically conducted, in that participants in both roles engaged in sustained communication about their research plans over a period of more than 5 weeks. The prolonged interactive relationship helped idea generation, and creation of well-thought out research plans to implement in their classroom.

The platforms also enabled open communication and interaction, which was fluid, since participants had the chance to comment on any posts allowing an unconstrained and free development of the ideas put forward. The ideas were open to external peer evaluation, which shows participants had a high degree of openness to feedback from others. The written ideas created a wealth of exposure to others, but also opportunities to understand themselves. Such learning asynchronously required sensitivity to language use on a truly international platform. Such communication involved posts in which peers asked for more information, contributed their own ideas, encouraged others, and even pointed out an issue that might have been overlooked.

The platforms therefore created an expansive learning opportunity, which involves learning and developing understandings, raising awareness and reflecting on the relevant experiences, as opposed to perpendicular learning, which implies learning without sufficient level of reflection, understanding or awareness. Such intensive written communication about the research developing ideas and self-questioning, as tapped by the mentors' critical support, can be expected to expand the pre-existing scope of the teachers.

We observed that teachers and mentors discussed similar issues from a wide variety of perspectives each week. For example, identifying the research topic, and developing research questions was a process of expansive learning, where the ideas generated were similar but unique to each research situation, reflecting context specificity. A number of research topics were generated, which provided opportunity to think further, beyond one's own context.

EVO was not only an opportunity for many teachers, but also for many mentors who worked jointly as a group, and displayed different mentoring strategies. They were supportive of the teachers' research engagement process, asking thought-provoking questions and advising specific research tools and analysis, which were also topics covered in the weekly sessions by the moderators.

These sessions offered a more formal input about research, while the online interaction between 'teacher and mentors' and 'teachers and teachers' shaped the research understanding through a less formal, more individualised practical talk. Understanding and developing research requires time and focused thinking with support from others, so the one-week follow-up after the input sessions offered extended time for generating own ideas, and sharing them in the platform for critical discussion and constructive feedback.

Such a short but intensive online course involving participants from multiple countries might have also have increased the teachers' motivation and influenced their identity. This in turn may have led, for some participants at least, to their interest in writing up their chapters for this edited e-book.

As a final word, we would like to express our gratitude to both our moderators who delivered the course content in the webinars and research mentors who provided support for the participants in the EVO 2018 itinerary.

Moderators: Richard Smith, Paula Rebolledo and Amol Padwad

Mentors: Abdullah Al-Rawahi, Ana Ines Salvi, Babita Sharma Chapagain, Beril Yücel Chris Banister, Elizabeth Muñoz, Ferah Senaydin, Jason Anderson, Mariana Serra, Mark Wyatt Melike Bulut, Michelle Evans, Phil Chappell, Rhian Webb, Ruben Mazzei, Sadeqa Ghazal, Sal Consoli, Seden Eraldemir Tuyan, and Sonika Gupta.

Exploratory action research experience: Developing meaningful interaction in my classroom in Buenos Aires

Maria Marta Mora

City of Buenos Aires, Argentina

My teaching context

I teach English as a foreign language to teenage students in a public secondary school in a neighbourhood called Flores, in the city of Buenos Aires. The name of the school is Colegio N°9 "Justo José de Urquiza", and there are about 1000 students in three shifts.

My focus group was made of 12 first-year students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, mostly working middle class and working class. Their ages ranged from 12 to 14. English lessons were twice a week, 80 minutes each. Since English became compulsory in primary schools in Buenos Aires in 2009, they have been learning English for seven years, but their trajectories did not seem to have been complete or continuous due to involuntary interruptions or lack of teachers.

My story of engaging in research after Classroom-based Research EVO

EVO fostered interaction within peers and organisers all the time and from the very beginning. Each participant had to share the progress of the work they were doing, step by step. Whenever we did so, the rest of the members of the Google+ Community where we exchanged information and projects were responsible for giving feedback. There was also another instance for communication in EVO 2018 and this was the Adobe Connect platform. In this space, there were live webinars and all participants were able to use a chatbox for spontaneous discussion. The possibility of "raising one's hand" on the platform was also available so the discussion became much richer.

Maria Marta Mora is an EFL teacher in a secondary school in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and a member of APIBA (Association of Teachers of English of Buenos Aires) and International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL).

She graduated as an EFL teacher from ISP "Joaquín V. Gonzalez" in 1991 and is a Specialist in Education and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). She was a Fulbright scholar in UCLA with the National Ministry of Education. She has long experience teaching teenagers in state schools. She attended Teachers' Research! 2017 in Buenos Aires, and participated in EVO 2018. She is interested in action research and is currently doing Exploratory Action Research (EAR) in her lessons.

Adobe Connect is an easy-to-use and easy-to-download platform. The feedback was always positive and it provided the rest of the participants with views from other teachers from all around the world, and from diverse academic backgrounds.
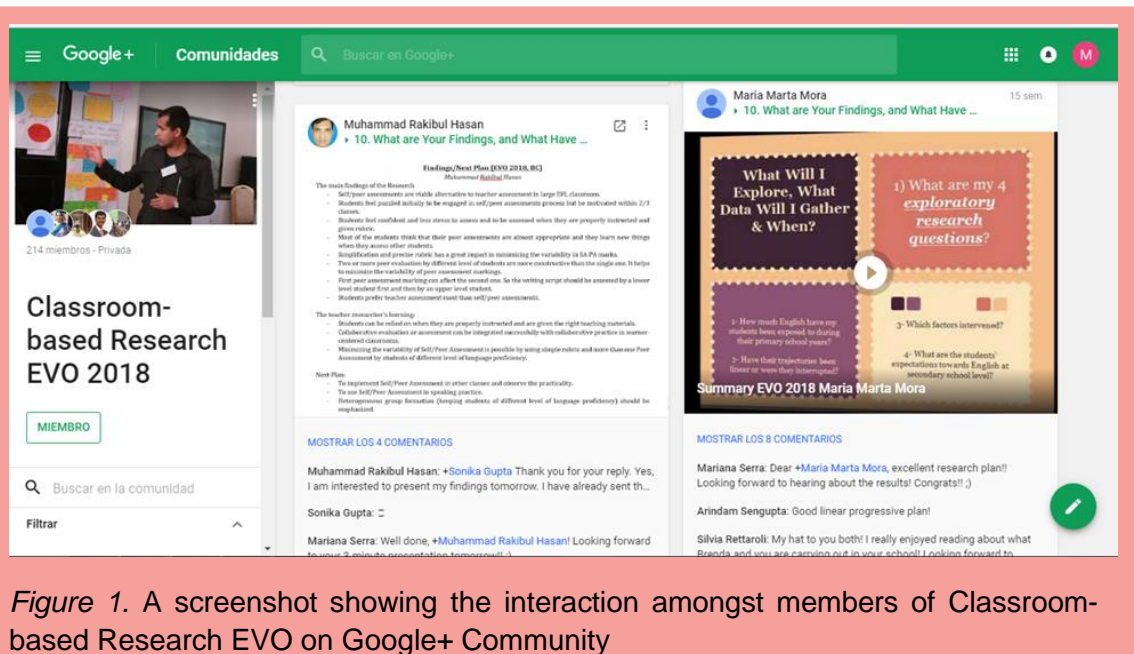

Figure 1. A screenshot showing the interaction amongst members of Classroom-based Research EVO on Google+ Community

How I joined EVO

I joined EVO as soon as I read about it because I had previously joined the 'Teachers Research! Facebook group. This is a community in which its administrator, Richard Smith, shares news, videos and documents for the EVO participants to get to know all about classroom-based research. People from everywhere in the world can become members. In the information section it clearly states its purpose: "This group aims to bring together English Language teachers for sharing their experiences and drawing attention to the growing interest in teachers as researchers. Please share your experiences and ideas. Give and get feedback from other teachers. This online platform can help you develop your professionalism."

The invitation had been posted, and I immediately realized that that was the space I needed to keep on learning and start practising EAR. Classroom-based research EVO was, and still is, a very useful resource bank for teachers when they need material and literature related to classroom research. And, of course, it is an excellent space for professional growth and development! I felt that the EVO research community would make me feel confident and would guide me throughout the process of learning, and consequently, I would better use the methodology that was being presented.

How I identified my research focus

I identified my research focus because for many years I had had classes with first year students which were not able to communicate orally in a successful way. I considered that I had to do something about that situation. I decided to focus on the difficulty that my beginner-level students had when it came to taking part in the class discussions and oral exchanges, such simple things as answering the teacher's questions or having short dialogues or doing roleplay.

This focus relates directly to my teaching context and, especially, to my teaching. Both the national curriculum, according to the National Law of Education (number 2606), passed in 2006, in its article number 30, item d), establishes as one of its aims to develop oral and written linguistic competences in order for students to understand and produce language both in Spanish and in foreign languages, and in the City of Buenos Aires, the curriculum design for the new secondary school (2014-2020) demands the acquisition and development of speaking skills, and communicative competence. So it was absolutely necessary to work hard on this issue.

My students had a remarkable deficit of these competences. It was clear to me from the beginning, but I did not know how to find a solution. I needed to learn how to help my students and to get the "how" in helping them. And as soon as I got into EAR and EVO I learned the "how".

My research focus is precisely this lack of ability that the students have to express themselves in English. My plan was to help them feel confident enough to be able to speak and take active participation in the lessons.

My purpose of research and questions or puzzles

The exploratory research questions that initiated this research were:

1. How much English have my first year students been exposed to during their primary school years?
2. Were their trajectories linear or were they interrupted? Which factors intervened?
3. If the students have been (theoretically) exposed to English during seven years of primary school, why don't they communicate in English?

These puzzles arose from the mere observation of the students' performance (or lack of it) during the lessons. They were reluctant to speak English when I invited them to do so. The diagnostic test that they were given by our school at the beginning of the year assessed reading comprehension, grammar, listening comprehension and writing, but it did not include speaking skills since the big number of students made it almost impossible to have oral interviews with all the new students.

My research plan and results

Collection tools and procedure

Initially, as seen in Photo 1 below, the English department of the school gave the first year students a diagnostic test to get an idea of what they came with at the beginning of their school year, now in secondary school.

Photo1. Students during the initial diagnostic test (Source: Author)

Students take this diagnostic test as soon as the school year begins. It is administered in one eighty-minute session.

Figure 2. An extract from initial diagnostic test

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Figure 3. Another extract from initial diagnostic test

It is then corrected by the teachers in the school English department, and it undergoes linguistic and skills analysis. It is finally marked and used to group students according to their performance and results. Those students who get similar marks are put together in groups according to rank of achievement. Results are reported to the school authorities. After this process we have quite a clear idea of how much English they have learnt throughout their primary education.

To get to know how much English the students had been exposed to, and to know about their trajectories, I carried out a survey (See Figure 5) with the students as soon as the school period started. This was done through a printed form with simple questions in L1 which the students had to respond to, in pen and pencil, and designed in a simple format that would make the students feel comfortable when responding to the survey. The idea here was to obtain first-hand responses from the students related to their own experiences in their primary school English lessons.

To learn about why they did not communicate in basic English, I used a shorter questionnaire (Also see Figure 6) in which students had to rank from 1 to 10 their perceptions on how much (or how little) they could speak English.

The students with the lowest speaking performances were in turn informally interviewed by their class counsellor who acted as an "external" agent, and who did collaborative work with me. I had interviews with the course consultant and with the course Spanish Language teacher, too. The aim of these interviews was to learn more about the students' situation.

Another way to explore my own and the students' performance, and in relation to delving into how proficient (or not) my students were at communicating in spoken English, was to record some lessons on video with the help of my colleague Brenda Paz, who also attended EVO 2018. I could watch myself and the students' responses and attitudes.

How I ensured the research was ethical

The research was ethical because the students' parents were notified of the research process that their children became part of. In addition, they signed a special permission to the school and to me as a teacher to keep the data obtained and the video recording only for the sake of the project and the research. No personal information about the students was revealed.

The way that I used to analyse the data was the following:

Qualitative analysis

The interviews were implemented and processed in detail. They were typed so as to be kept as a record and to complement the analysis of what was going on in the classroom. Afterwards, content of the interviews was analysed thematically.

Quantitative analysis

The data were also analysed in detail during the whole process. The survey data were carefully categorised and later on used in order to decide what action would be taken. At this stage, reflection became the most important part of the procedure. Since I had to wait for the school year to start in my country, when it was time to carry out the research, the EVO had already finished, so I asked for the invaluable help and assistance of Leyla Nuñez, one of the first Chilean Champion Teachers. She helped me virtually through Skype sessions and WhatsApp and guided me throughout my EAR process, since Classroom-based Research EVO was not available any longer by that time.

Mentor(s) and peer's support

The EVO materials were very helpful and the interaction with the EVO peers was fantastic in the sense that as soon as one of the participants of the EVO posted on the platform, the peers were always ready to respond positively and encouraged the rest to continue and gave some guidance or suggested ideas. In my case, since school had not started yet during the process of the EVO, I elaborated a plan for my research. See the video of the plan at this link . What I could do successfully during the EVO was to identify the issues that I would focus on later, and plan my work, as soon as the school year began.

Result**s**

Findings of the initial diagnostic test are summarised in Figure 4 below.
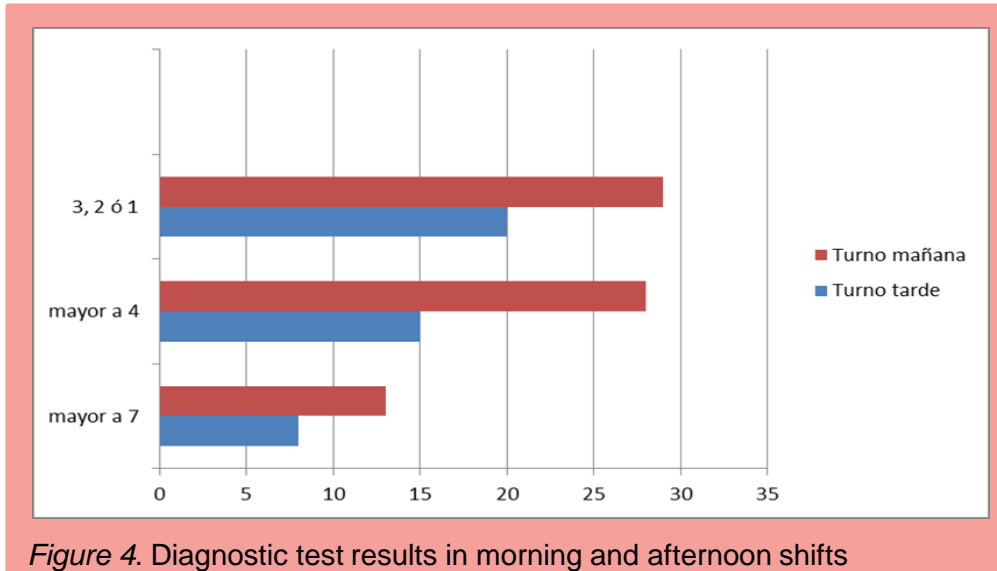
Figure 4. Diagnostic test results in morning and afternoon shifts

The x-axis shows the number of students who did the initial diagnostic test. The red bars represent the number of students in the morning shift and the blue bars represent the number of students in the afternoon shift. The y-axis shows the marks (on a 1-10 marking scheme basis) that the students obtained, organized in three groups according to marking bands: over 7 marks, over 4 marks and marks 1, 2 or 3.

Figure 5. Were the students' trajectories linear, or were they interrupted? Which factors intervened?

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Most of the students' primary school trajectories were not linear at all. In fact, they were interrupted, and sometimes this happened on many occasions. The factors that intervened were mainly the students' families who moved in and out of Buenos Aires, and sometimes more than once, teacher absenteeism, or lack of teachers in the public educational system, among others.

ENCUESTA SOBRE TUS CLASES DE INGLÉS EN 1º 5ª

Teniendo en cuenta que la COMUNICARSE implica no sólo HABLAR, sino también ENTENDER LO QUE ESCUCHÁS, ESCRIBIR Y ENTENDER LO QUE LEÉS:

De 1 a 10...

¿Cuánto *podés* comunicarte en inglés?   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

¿Cuánto *te gustaría* comunicarte en inglés?   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

¿Cómo te gustaría que te ayudara tu profesora a aprender mejor inglés?

_____
_____
_____
_____

¿Creés que vas a usar inglés una vez que termines tu escuela secundaria? ¿Para qué?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Figure 6. Questionnaire on the students' self-awareness of their communicative abilities*.*
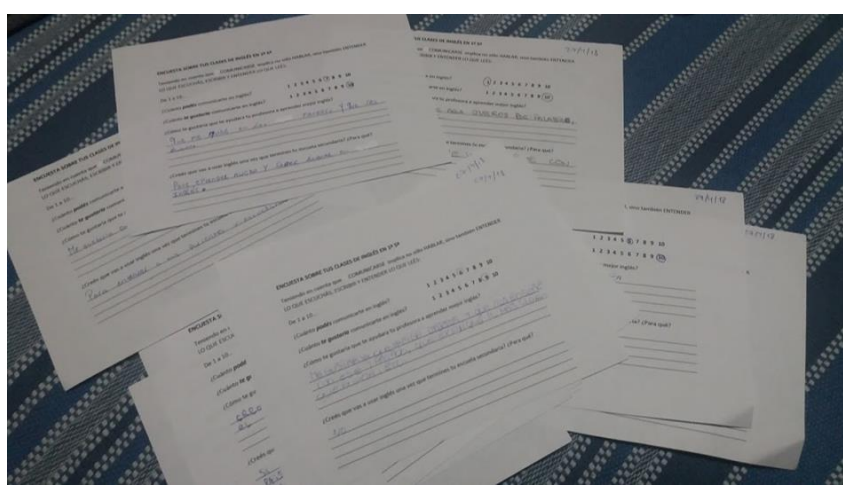
Figure 7. Questionnaire answers

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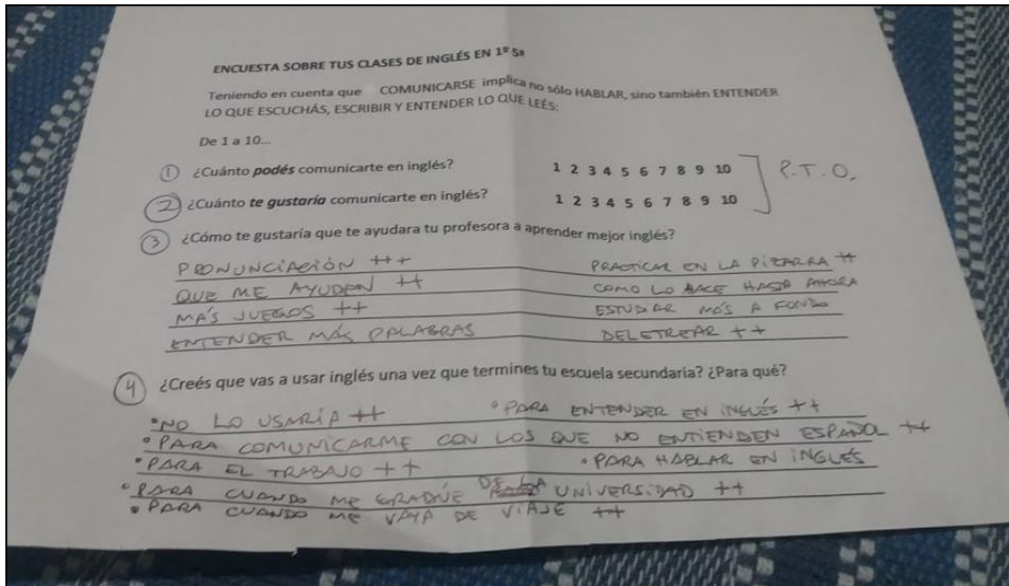
Figure 8. My summary of questionnaire answers

Table 1 shows that students have varying degrees of self-confidence to communicate in English, while they have relatively higher motivation to communicate in English.

Table 1. Frequency of responses to survey questions

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How much can you communicate in English?	2 sts	-	-	-	2 sts	3 sts	1 st	2 sts	2 sts	-
How much would you like to communicate in English?	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 st	11 sts

Almost all students expressed interest and commitment to using English for communication in the future. Taking into account that communicating means not only speaking, but also understanding what you hear, writing, and understanding what you read, students responded to survey questions. *Table 2* below summarises students' responses.

Table 2. Summary of survey results

How would you like your teacher to help you learn English better?	
pronunciation practice	3 students
extra help from the teacher	2 students
understanding more words	1 student
practice on the board	2 students
just as she does it now	1 student
studying hard	1 student
spelling practice	2 students
What will you use English for when you graduate from secondary school?	
I don't think I will use it	2 students
To understand things in English	2 students
To communicate with people who don't understand Spanish	1 student
For my work	2 students
To speak English	1 student
For when I graduate from university	2 students
To travel in the future	2 students

Regarding whether and how they would like me to help them to learn English better, the answers were quite even in number. They ranged from demanding extra help from the teacher to pronunciation practice, spelling and writing on the board. Table 2 displays the variety of students' choices.
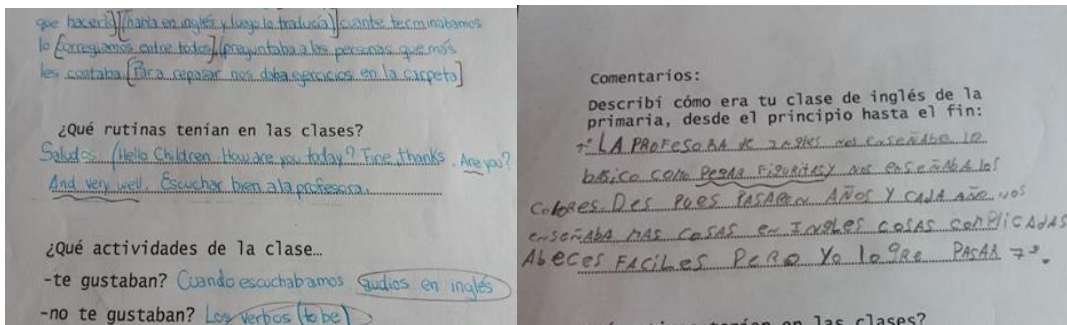
Figure 9. Survey on the students' experiences in primary school English lessons

When I asked my students to describe what their primary school English lessons were like (See Figure 9), many different answers appeared, since they came from different primary schools in and out of the area of our secondary school:

• "…the teacher taught us to do basic things in English, like sticking pictures (?)"
• "She taught us the colours."
• "Then years went by and she taught us more things in English, complicated things, and sometimes easy things."
• "She spoke English and then she translated for us."
• "We did group correction after we finished our activities."
• "The teacher asked us who found things more difficult to do."
• "For revision we did exercises in our folders."

When asked about the routines of the lesson, they answered things like:

• "She said hello, children. How are you today? Fine, thanks, and you?"

I asked them which class activities they liked best, and they reported having liked the listening activities. As to what they did not like, they responded that they found it really hard to work with verbs.

The result of my EVO-inspired exploratory work helped me discover which would be the most appropriate decision and course of action to take within this particular class. And more importantly, the students were able to express themselves and allow me as a teacher to give them resources to improve their speaking skills. I implemented some activities which really improved the students' attitude towards participating in oral exchanges in the EFL class.

One of the main challenges I faced not during, but after the EVO, was to wait until school started. Most of the EVO participants were already working in their own countries and had their students ready for the research. That was not the case for teachers in Argentina. The EVO was in January, and I had to be patient and only in March could I start my research. The other important challenge that I came up to was recording my own lessons, since one is not (at least in my context) used to watching oneself teaching in a critical way. I think that videoing my lessons will become an important part of my professional development.

This research has influenced me in two ways:

Firstly, I have become aware that I need to be more self-critical, and learn to stop and observe my work. Secondly, and in a way reinforcing the previous idea, I have discovered that it is only through evidence that one can think critically and take time for reflection.

''Firstly, I have become aware that I need to be more self-critical, and learn to stop and observe my work''

On the other hand, my learners have, thanks to this research, accepted that for a teacher to develop, and for themselves to grow as students, reflection and critical thinking needs to be a part of their school experience. Though this was not fully admitted by students and they have been somehow reluctant to changes in the class methodology of work, I consider that a new challenge appears, and it is to sustain the method throughout the school year. The next step is to constantly review and observe in order to plan new action.

As a final reflection, I can say that I originally considered that research was exclusively done by university people, and the final results would only be useful to them. After EVO and after my reflection and action in the classroom, I feel that as a school teacher I have many things to learn, but also many other things to share, and sharing was one of the richest elements of the EVO. Not only is exploratory action research productive for my own practice, but it is also for students and colleagues.

This research was carried out by applying the EAR principles to my everyday teaching classroom practice. I have discovered through exploratory practice that I can be self-critical and develop as a teacher in an enriching experience (Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p.144).

''As a final reflection, I can say that I originally considered that research was exclusively done by university people, and the final results would only be useful to them. After EVO and after my reflection and action in the classroom, I feel that as a school teacher I have many things to learn, but also many other things to share, and sharing was one of the richest elements of the EVO''

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A Research on How to Make Assessment Effective

Giulia Bertagnolio Licio,
Torino, Italy

My Teaching Context

The school for Dental Technicians where I worked is a building from 1919, restored after the Second World War's bombings. It is a huge building with very high ceilings; I worked almost always in the same classroom. In the school there are about 660 students from low social background, and about 90 teachers. The school offers three curricula: courses for Dental Technicians, Opticians and Mechanical Maintenance Workers. In the courses for Dental Technicians the subjects are: Maths, Italian, English, Science, Anatomy, Chemistry, Materials Science, Physics and laboratories for technicians as well as Design and Drawing.

Giulia Bertagnolio Licio is an ESL Italian teacher based in Turin, her hometown. Giulia has been teaching for twelve years now and her experiences has varied a lot, for example she taught employed and unemployed adults and teenagers at various types of secondary schools (linguistic, artistic, vocational: for dental technicians and opticians). She always tries to build up relationships with her students so to have them more involved in the lessons. She is into assessment due to the unsatisfying preparation received on her way to become a teacher; she tries to make assessment an effective part of the learning process.

The classroom where I developed my research had only 15 desks; it was small and uncomfortable. The walls had a neuter colour and nothing hanging on.

My 4th year students are 17 up to 20 years old and there are 15 students, 6 girls and 9 boys. They don't think of English as an important subject, indeed they feel they will always be working in a dental lab without ever needing English, which clearly makes things rather difficult for any ESL teacher.

My Story of Engaging in Research

I have worked as an ESL teacher for twelve years and I love it. Some important parts of my job are relationship and assessment. I wanted to study and research about assessment because it is often affected by the teacher-student relationship, and because it is a fundamental step in the learning process. I often noticed that students got upset or disappointed by tests and feedback, getting discouraged about studying and relationships.

I also wanted to improve my knowledge and understanding of students' learning through assessment and for this reason I tried to find a PhD in my hometown university, without success. This is when I read a tweet on the IATEFL ReSIG page and I applied. It was a discussion on teachers' motivation and professional development, something I am very keen on. The online discussion was tremendous, and affected me significantly. At the end of the activity, Mark Wyatt suggested that I took part in EVO 2018: it would certainly be a very good PD and research opportunity.

After starting EVO, I began to work on my possible research focus, and I chose assessment. Also, I chose assessment because my teaching context was new, and it was the first time I had taught at a vocational school, so I just tried to make some reflections on effective assessment.

Purpose of Research and Questions or Puzzles

In my teaching experience, I noticed that almost no teacher shared assessment ideas or procedures with colleagues and all the assumptions about assessment were taken for granted (a school common grid was used for every class). I wanted my assessment to improve students' learning and understanding of the subject and I wanted my students to learn through evaluation, grading and feedback, which is why I started to talk about effective assessment, which happens when students learn through it. I think assessment is a strong motivational tool.

A) Questions I asked myself (research focus):
1. What is effective assessment, in my opinion?
2. Why doesn't assessment help my students to learn?
3. What can I do to make it effective?

B) Questions I asked my colleagues:

1. What do you think effective assessment is?

2. How do you make it effective?

C) Questions for my students:

1. What is assessment according to you?

2. What should assessment do to be effective according to you?

3. How do you feel if assessment is effective?

4. Do you feel like you are assessed effectively?

5. Do you apply the teacher's marking, suggestions and corrections to the next test or task? Why?

My Research Plan and Results

Before starting this research, I asked my students their permission to discuss some aspects of our assessment practice with them. I formally asked them to fill in a questionnaire and their consent to use its data in a research project, a webinar and an article. Then I talked about this research with my colleagues and asked them to participate in my interview, giving me their permission to publish the findings. The process of my research can be seen in Table 1. In analysis of data I made use of a free Web 2.0 tool, Answergarden, to create word clouds or tag clouds, which is useful for collecting main ideas and brainstorming. It can be embedded anywhere online.

Table 1. Process of my research project

Data collection	Data analysis
I answered questions A1, A2, A3.	I wrote down my self-reflection, answering these three questions. I underlined the keywords and relevant phrases.
I interviewed two colleagues, asking them questions B1 and B2.	On a school morning (two hours), I interviewed my colleagues. While they were answering my questions, I noted down their answers and identified recurrent keywords and phrases.
I gave students the questionnaire (questions C1, C2, C3, C4, C5).	With the questionnaires I carried out a qualitative and a quantitative analysis using the recollected answers. After collecting all the questionnaires, I underlined recurrent phrases and keywords. Later on, I created a word cloud with the results on Answergarden (qualitative analysis). For the quantitative analysis I used Excel and displayed findings on Windows Word Graphs and Excel graphs.

Mentors' and Peers' Support

Working on an online platform where all the participants and mentors could access, it was easy to share ideas, as well as to get help and guidance along the way. On G+ for EVO 2018, every step of the process had to be documented and shared, which made the whole process controlled, stimulating and engaging. I received practical help various times in the form of suggestions and my mentor's help. For example, I discovered that my research focus is frequently investigated.

I also learnt about dynamic assessment thanks to my mentor, and I could always find support and advice from other group members. When it was time for us to present the research questions, I had many doubts about how to formulate them, but Kenan Dikilitas and Mariana Serra helped me shape and focus them.

Every week's topic was an opportunity to grow and learn about and through research. Lots of clearly focused and useful articles and handbooks were made available for us as learners during the course. Teachers Engaging in Research especially helped me to decide how to structure my research. I also benefited greatly from all the webinars, some unique opportunities for me to learn from and listen to acknowledged experts such as Richard Smith, Kenan Dikilitaş and Paula Rebolledo.

Before committing into the webinar presentation, I received very encouraging feedback. Asli Saglam, Mariana Serra and Kenan Dikilitaş commented that my presentation touched on interesting topics and that the research had many relevant points.

Results

Self-reflection
Question 1: What is effective assessment, in my opinion?

Assessment is a continuous process; it allows students to see how much they have learnt so far and what they must do to learn more; it is a highly motivational tool. My reflection pointed out that if assessment is used positively by the teacher (not only to judge, but to see the learning achievements) and if it contains human traits (the way assessment is delivered) it is more useful for students to understand their strengths and weaknesses and possibly it can be a learning tool.
The visual representation in Figure 1 shows some of the important features of effective assessment which are the awareness of the content learnt and the skills developed up to a certain time and the awareness of what's missing to achieve the goal.

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GOAL

What we have learnt …..   so far.   What is yet to be learnt to reach the
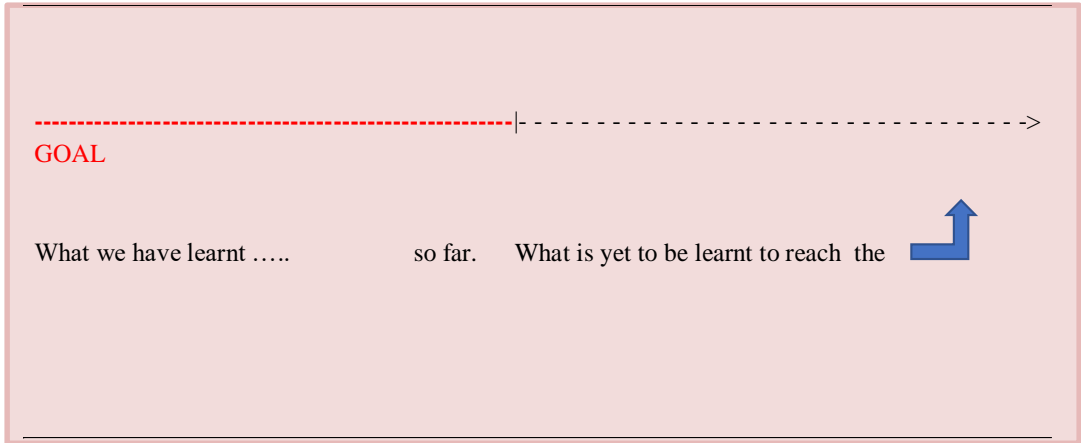
Question 2: Why doesn't assessment help my students to learn?

They do not feel involved: often they get the mark but not a feedback motivating their progress or their mistakes. They don't feel motivated to learn more. Our school evaluation and assessment system is fixed, instead it should be adapted to each situation.

Question 3: What can I do to make it effective?

To make it effective I should:
• Always refer to the performance, never to the student
• Always highlight the strengths first and then the weaknesses
• Always make clear where students are in their learning process: How much they have learnt, how much they *still* must learn
• Possibly make students an active part of the assessment process

Interview my colleagues

My colleagues focused on some aspects related to the completeness of the evaluation process: according to them to be effective, assessment should address the four skills and be related to the whole learning process and not be limited to the single test. Assessment is effective when it is human, which means it considers the pupil's sensitivity.

1.What do you think effective assessment is?   2. How do you make it effective?

the four skills

human

the whole learning process
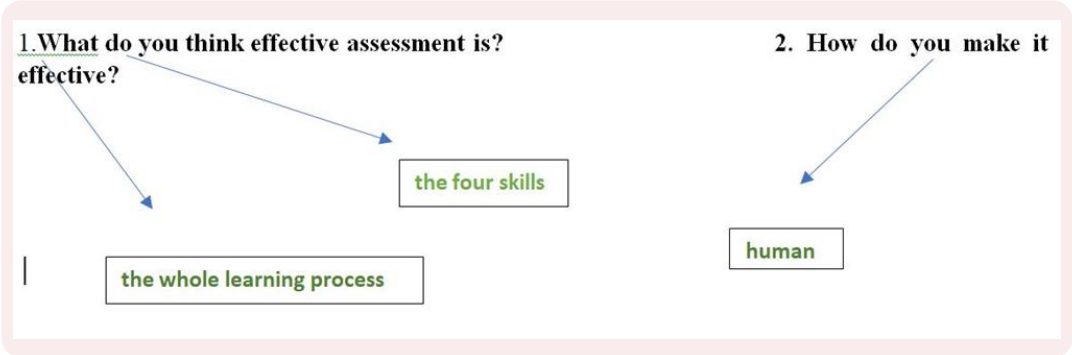
Questionnaire for my students

Qualitative analysis

Fourteen students answered the questionnaire using various words to define their own ideas. In f.2, the most frequent definition for assessment, and the main point to students, is that it *raises awareness*. They outlined that assessment *pushes students to improve* and that it represents the *credit* for committing in studying. Students recognised that assessment *stimulates commitment* and *it improves performance.* They wrote that assessment can be very helpful, that it triggers interest and awareness about one's own production.

My own reflection about these data is that students feel evaluation and assessment as a crucial moment in learning: it is THE moment when the majority develop awareness about their own learning. I told them?

Figure 2. Summary of student response

That I would only choose negative or positive definitions that allowed students to identify the role assessment has in their experience (Source: https://answergarden.ch/799842)

Quantitative analysis

In the first question, the majority of students see assessment as the result of study.
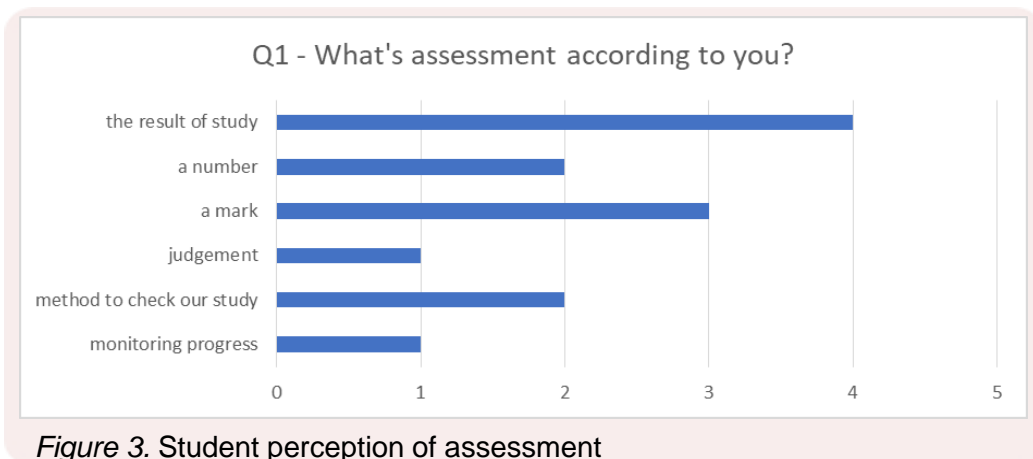
Figure 3. Student perception of assessment

What is worrying to me is that some think that assessment is just a *mark* or a *number*.

The second question surveyed student perceptions towards features of effective assessment. Student response is shown in Figure 4 below.
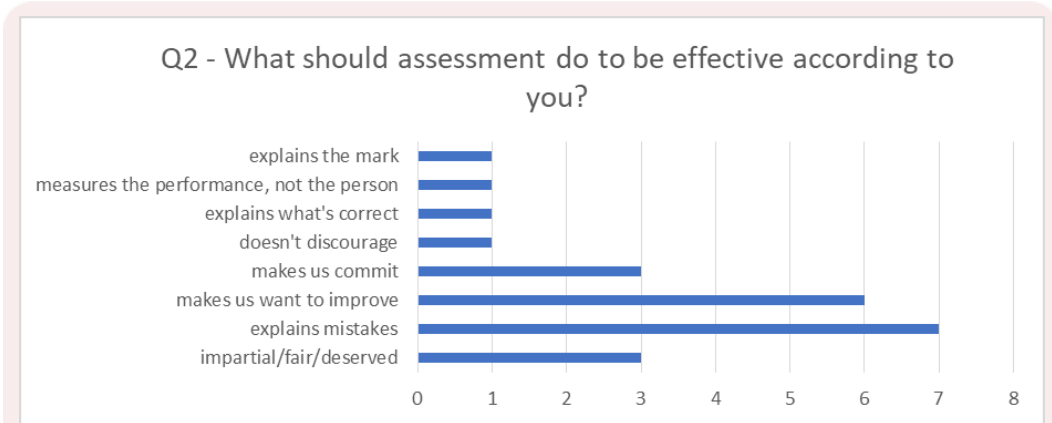
Figure 4. Features of effective assessment

Despite expecting different results, I can see that my students think that effective assessment should explain mistakes and make us want to improve.
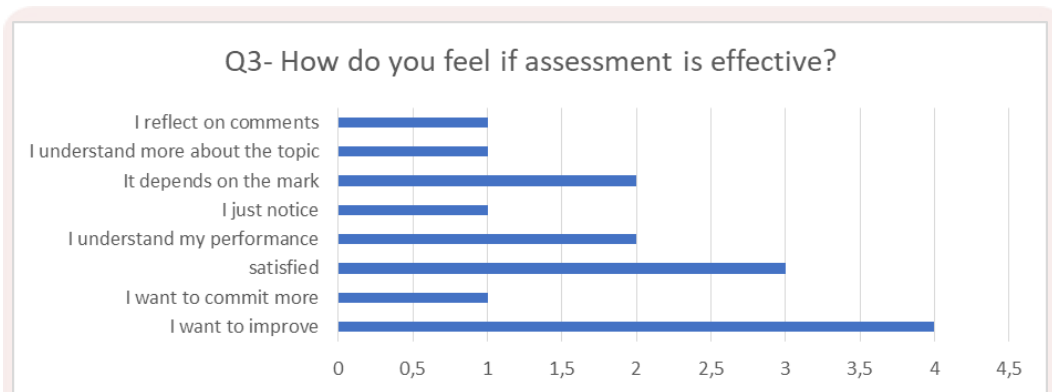
Figure 5. Students feelings about effective assessment

A remarkable result for me, maybe because it directly answers my research focus, was that the majority of my students associate effective assessment with their own desire to improve. An assessment process that sparks their willingness is not only a great achievement in teaching, but also essential for learning.
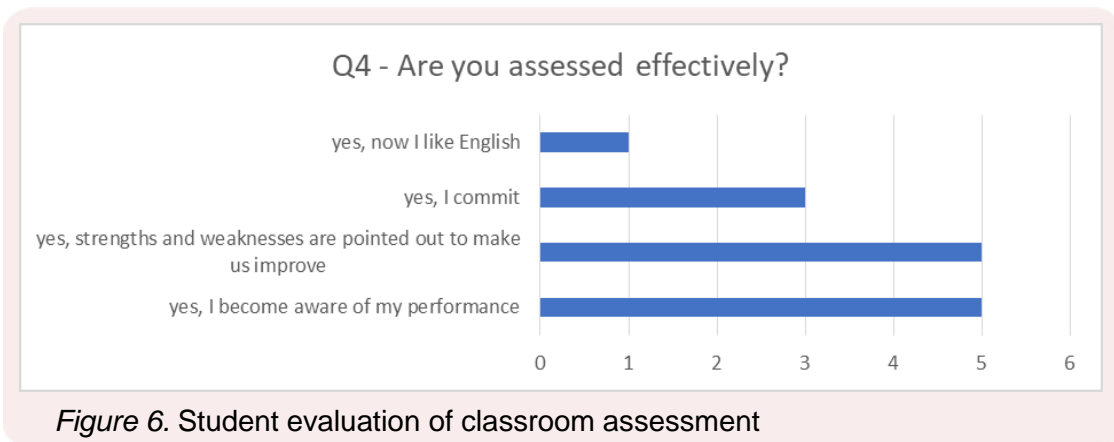
Figure 6. Student evaluation of classroom assessment

As illustrated in Figure 6 student response to question 4 left me satisfied: it seems that ten out of fourteen students see my assessment practice as something effective. I am also considering the fact that not one student gave a negative answer.
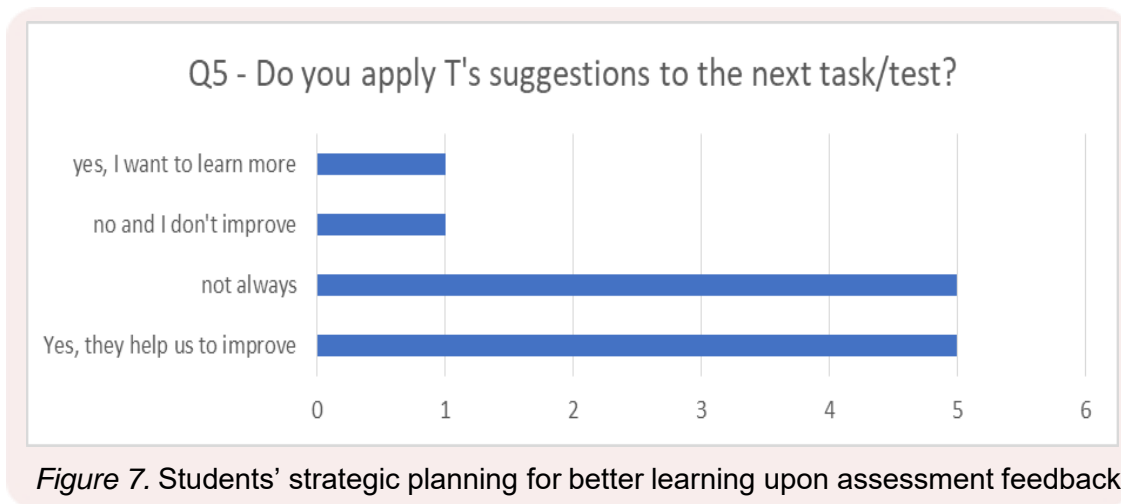
Figure 7. Students' strategic planning for better learning upon assessment feedback

This was the most sensitive point: teachers can do everything right, but if students do not apply their suggestions, there is no improvement. I find this is the most challenging moment in teaching: how do we make sure students use our advice to improve learning?

During this whole research project, I experienced mixed feelings.
I felt positive about the online community, which provides much more sense of solidarity than the whole school system in Italy, for example.
At the same time, I was disappointed that I could not find answers to my questions in my home country. I am grateful to all those who gave me such encouragement through EVO.

REFLECTION

I learnt that in research there are precise steps to take and data to collect and analyse. I lacked any preparation in research, but I was able to start overcoming this failure thanks to all the procedure I learnt and followed in the Classroom-based research EVO.

Mentors helped me to identify my real focus and the whole community supported me, which made me feel less inexperienced and less lonely: I can't but be grateful to every community member.

> '' I learnt that in research there are precise steps for data analysis and collection. I lacked any preparation in research, but I was able to start overcoming thanks to the procedures I learnt in the Classroom-based research EVO. ''

Adjusting my research aims was the trigger that pushed me further. Thanks to all the material shared on the community platform, I was able to see how to work on every single step and I could do it at my pace. It was not easy, but I made it. Maybe my research is a bit rudimental, but it is a great achievement to me, because it has helped me to balance my interventions and work in class for my students' benefit.

After I completed and presented this research during the webinar, I realized something about my teaching: I had taken for granted lots of good practices which I did not apply at all. I imagined I could deal with assessment in a satisfactory way, but it was just mere marking and grading. Instead, thanks to the research, I had the opportunity to investigate my methods and question them; what is more, I managed to involve students in the assessment process, so to make them more aware and to give myself more space for feedback and understanding of students' learning. I don't think I got a final answer, but I have started, and I want to move forward.

As an Italian teacher, I am so proud of my participation into Classroom-based research EVO 2018. I have learnt more in these weeks than in one whole year's compulsory professional development courses for teachers and here is the point: thanks to the tools and instruction about the practice, research proves a powerful engine to continue my own professional development. I know I will keep asking myself questions, especially about assessment, since in Italy this topic is not advanced. I really want to keep learning how to research because it was useful to ameliorate not only the teaching, but especially students' learning. Keeping up with the good work is also feasible thanks to ReSIG and the dedicated groups I came to know, and I want to move on with this kind of professional development.

'' Instead, thanks to the research, I had the opportunity to investigate my methods and question them; what is more, I managed to involve students in the assessment process, and so, make them more aware, and to give myself more space for feedback and understanding of students' learning.''

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A Research on How to Make Assessment Effective

Giulia Bertagnolio Licio, Torino, Italy

Transforming L2 learning and identity negotiation through linguistic landscaping and field trips

Andrea Enikő Lypka,
University of South Florida,
United States of America

My teaching context

In this participatory exploratory action research, I describe how I infused multisensory and multilingual repertoires with migrant and refugee English language learners (ELs) to develop a responsive Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults (LESLLA) curriculum and enhance second language (L2) development. I share examples of student-initiated mobile learning activities that include field trips and linguistic landscape projects or digital photographs of "public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25) that connect instruction to students' realities. Compared to English as a second language (ESL) programming that conceptualize ELs as deficient and languages as isolated practices, strength-based approaches grounded in students' sociocultural and digital repertoires can stimulate emic perspectives, intercultural communication, and linguistic awareness.

As I began my volunteer ESL teaching at a US community-based organization (CBO) in 2014, I became inspired by pedagogy that honored diverse voices, languages, modalities, and sources of knowledge to better understand the disconnect between the print-based curriculum and the L2 investment of students with interrupted learning.

Andrea, a native Hungarian, is an English for Academic Purposes faculty and a Ph.D. candidate in the Second Language Acquisition and Instructional Technology program at the University of South Florida. Her research interests include participatory visual methods, discourse analysis, learner identity, and community-academic partnerships.

The CBO relies on volunteer support and sporadic grants to provide adult ESL, computer, Spanish literacy, and math courses, and legal referral in a diverse low-socioeconomic neighborhood. Through short-term courses, the agency aims to enable learners to acquire L2, academic, and digital literacy skills to achieve "a better quality of life" (CBO website, n. d.).

Nevertheless, developing these skills may not translate to improved quality of life given the scant employment and training opportunities in this area.

My students were 11 men and four women with emergent print-literacy and L2 skills from Latin-America, with extended US residence and employment in low-skilled occupations (see Table 1).

They had rich life experiences and interests, spoke two or more languages, and maintained transnational affiliations with the Latinx diaspora and their home communities through What's App and Facebook on their portable multimedia devices. Most of them struggled to introduce themselves, follow instructions, and describe their occupations in English language. Their ambigious immigration status, low L1 print literacy, and socioeconomic necessities, might have constrained their access to professional, educational, and social opportunities.

Table 1. Student Information

Pseudonyms	Age	Place of Birth	First Languages and Other Languages	Years in the US	Formal ESL Learning	Schooling	Place of Employment in the US
Rosalina	33	Mexico	Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Spanish	14	4 months	Elementary	Maintenance
Olivia	31	Mexico	Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Spanish	11	4 months	Elementary	Construction
Maria	35	Venezuela	Spanish	13	4 months	Middle school	Domestic service
Sofia	48	Nicaragua	Spanish	15	6 months	High school	Domestic service
Gabino	35	Guatemala	K'iche', Spanish	11	1 year	Middle school	Construction
Gaspar	23	Guatemala	K'iche', Spanish	12	4 months	Middle school	Landscaping
Mario	20	Guatemala	Spanish	10	3 months	High school	Construction
Luis	27	El Salvador	Spanish	10	2 months	Middle school	Construction
Castel	32	Mexico	Spanish	14	4 months	High school	Landscaping
Cordero	26	Mexico	Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Spanish	13	4 months	Middle school	Landscaping
Dasio	31	Mexico	Tzotzil, Spanish	11	4 months	Middle school	Landscaping
Sergio	30	Mexico	Tzotzil, Spanish	11	1 year	Middle school	Construction
Guadalupe	56	Mexico	Spanish	15	5 years	Middle school	Butcher
Juan	20	Mexico	Spanish	10	3 months	Middle school	Landscaping
Sanchez	36	Mexico	Spanish, Portuguese	4	2 months	Middle school	Construction

Particularly, Indigenous learners' education was hindered by socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, and racial disparities (Barillas-Chón 2010). Unequal power relations among LESLLA, print-literate ELs, and native speakers, English-only, transmission-oriented teaching, and other approaches that tend to ignore students' life experiences and cultural-linguistic competencies may inhibit them to negotiate their identities to gain access to socioeconomic capital and L2 communities (Barillas-Chón 2010; Norton, 2013). Despite the lack of reliable transportation and affordable childcare, insufficient teaching materials, and sporadic internet connection in the class, students wanted to improve their target language skills to broaden their employment opportunities and communicate in professional and social settings. To adequately respond to students' educational challenges, I needed to better understand their educational and migration trajectories and material conditions.

My story of engaging in research

As part of the Electronic Village Online (EVO) classroom-based research group, a professional learning community organized by the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in 2018, I employed Exploratory Action Research design (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018) to systematically make sense of multimodal and translingual practices in my classroom. Drawing on Norton's (2013) conceptualization of identity and my language learning experiences, I assumed that speaking a L2 is connected to legitimizing one's belonging in L2 communities of practice. To gain access to education, economic, and health capital and to claim the right to speak, ELs mobilize their agency to (re)configure their positions in relation to interlocutors, context, content, and wider discourses. Embedded in power relations, successful negotiation of ascribed and self-imposed identities and agency mediate L2 socialization (Norton, 2013). Personal mobile technologies (e.g., photos and videos on cellular phones can be instantly distributed on social media at no cost) enable seamless and fun communication. Thus, integrating digital activities, experiential learning, and scaffolding through shared languages (e.g. translating, using cognate words), visuals (e.g., linguistic landscapes and digital storytelling), and peer support can leverage literacy and linguistic barriers and enhance meaningful and context-specific L2 development.

My purpose of research

To align my professional beliefs with students' realities, I have shifted my practitioner-researcher roles to critically examine issues relevant to them, build camaraderie, and boost L2 fluency through verbal, semiotic, and mobile learning means and real-life situations. Through this study, I strive to empower practitioners to explore the theoretical concepts of L2 identity, power, multimodality, and translanguaging within their own classrooms. To achieve these goals, I embraced learner-driven stories to increase participation and ensured that the students know their rights.

> To align my professional beliefs with students' realities, I have shifted my practitioner-researcher roles to critically examine issues relevant to them, build camaraderie, and boost L2 fluency through verbal, semiotic, and mobile learning means and real-life situations.

After an initial tutoring session, participants used their personal smartphones to document community strengths and/or issues by taking photographs and videos about local static or digital (non)public signs, or linguistic landscapes (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), analyzing them, and creating social media campaigns, public exhibits, or participatory films (Lypka, 2018).

Through weekly class conversations, they (de)constructed multimodal texts relevant to their lives, examined patterns and themes, and proposed alternative messages while simultaneously deepening their L2 expertise through visual, experiential, linguistic, digital, and interactional support.

Examples of learner-authored multimodal projects

Linguistic Landscapes (Description revised for an upper-intermediate level ESL class): This task invites ELs to explore the relevance of language and culture by capturing digital photographs of local signs (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). To achieve the outcomes of this activity, students are first introduced to persuasive strategies and descriptive and comparative language and deconstruct signs. Then, they discuss thematically relevant images. Follow-up activities can include designing a social media campaign or a video tour or writing logs on a collective digital map, Google Map, to enhance public awareness of various social issues.

Field trips: Students are first introduced to content-relevant vocabulary (e.g., grocery shopping) and question formation, then compile a shopping list using store flyers, and purchase items within an allocated budget. They can interview family members about their shopping habits, document their interactions with clerks, photograph store signage, and participate in follow-up debriefing sessions.

My research questions

I devised these questions to frame my research journey:

1. In what ways does this community-engaged digital curriculum foreground participants' experiences and cultural and linguistic capital and support authentic L2 communication?

2. What resources do participants draw upon to constitute their identities in their multimodal narratives?

My research plan and results

The investigation was situated in a community-based ESL classroom where I had been a teacher for three years. Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board, I obtained participants' consent, used pseudonyms to conceal their anonymity, and negotiated cultural, linguistic, literacy, privacy, and dissemination concerns on an ongoing basis. I aimed to transform my practice following these stages:

1. I identified initial teaching and learning challenges, surveyed learning perceptions through class discussions, and journaled about these experiences;
2. I expanded my inquiry to the EVO community and reflected on these experiences;
3. I developed research questions and revised these questions in light of my interactions with ELs, CBO staff, EVO peers, and relevant literature;
4. I designed a curriculum inspired by participatory visual methods and documented this process;
5. I analyzed and reflected on the outcomes and revised the intervention as needed.

How I collected data?

In this paper, learner-authored artifacts became pedagogical and research data. Additional methodology involved observing and documenting participants' experiences with various multimodal texts and responsive practices. I assessed community needs through volunteering at events and acting as a participant-observer and teacher at this CBO. Data collection involved participant-created or found visuals, captions and comments related to these artifacts, my journal, observation and field notes, and individual interviews with participants after the completion of the class.

Data analysis

To uncover emic perspectives on the complexity of L2 socialization and identity negotiation, I analyzed the existing qualitative data through iterative coding of common themes (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018) in visuals, interview transcripts, and my journal and field notes. To increase the validity and reliability of this study, I employed diverse data sources, member checking through critical dialogues with EVO, EL, and CBO peers, reflected on these insights, and refined my analysis based on notes taken after the member checking. For example, to reveal student perceptions, I engaged in small group and whole class interactions using the following questions: How does this task help you in your life? How can we make this activity more meaningful to you? I then created a mind map of this discussion that captured students' voices.

The CBO director served as a cultural guide by translating and answering questions related to Latinx and Indigenous cultures. My EVO mentor, Ana Ines, challenged me to clarify my research steps, analysis, and questions, and Elizabeth Bekes, an EVO peer, corroborated my observations through her experience with LESLLA learners. In addition to critical support, in the EVO learning community, I have gained hands-on analysis practice through webinars, Google + activities, and interactions.

As part of this analysis, I first reread the materials and coded themes by underlining words with similar meaning, created categories, and identified recurring patterns across data sources. Then, I shared my initial codes with critical peers and co-researchers. Specifically, in the form of one word or visual representation, I negotiated my analysis with ELs following the weekly discussions driven by learner-created visuals and shared my analysis with EVO peers. Next, I revisited the data and extracted themes across diverse data sources to support the research questions. Finally, I presented the initial findings at an EVO webinar and reflected on this experience.

Results

In an effort to express the complexity of my evolving professional development, the preliminary findings encapsulate thematic representations of my teaching and learning dilemmas. A recurrent theme emerged from these analyses: although sometimes it was challenging to tackle assignments while dealing with family and work commitments, ELs appreciated that they could draw on collective sociocultural wealth, such as home languages, gestures, familiar words, pictures, lived experiences, oral language, and peer support to facilitate their learning.

Anchor teaching in students' resources and experiences

One way to create an equitable educational space grounded in ELs' knowledge and authentic meaning-making is through implementing participatory and experiential practices, such as guided group talks, peer mentoring, and experiential learning, such as field trips, community walks, linguistic landscape assignments, and reflections. The critical discussions and intentional observations during these tasks enabled students to recognize how language and power are embodied in local signs and discourses. For example, the text on a T-shirt (Figure 1) sparked debates about the visibility of particular languages and cultures. Several students identified the prominence of English and languages that are less characteristic to local cultural groups (German and Italian).
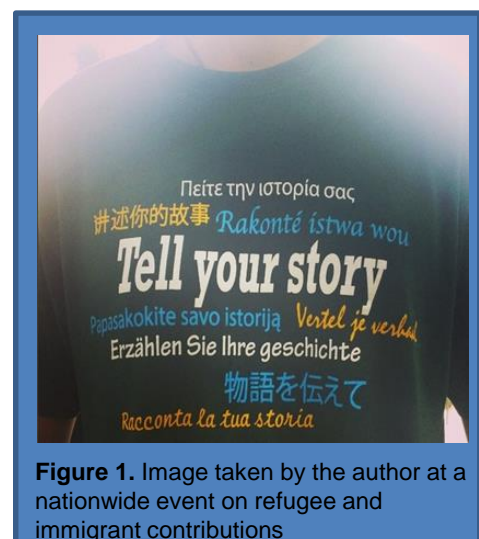
Figure 1. Image taken by the author at a nationwide event on refugee and immigrant contributions

Additionally, they found problematic that Spanish and other languages and the migration history from Latin-America were not embodied in the event flyer. When learners' sociocultural wealth is not mirrored in social contexts, it might diminish their L2 investment (Norton, 2013).

A store visit to purchase items for a student's birthday party stimulated awareness of communication practices that marginalize ELs. I noticed that store signs tended to neglect the local linguistic and cultural diversity: Spanish was not as visible as I would have expected and minority languages were absent. Furthermore, when a student's L2 clarification request was answered in Spanish by the clerk, this has sparked the students' L2 interaction avoidance (Norton, 2013). Although these observations provided a nuanced understanding to why the students equated their preference to purchase groceries at the *bodega* with their comfort communicating in Spanish language in their introductions at the beginning of the semester, they also provided opportunities to question who has the right to speak(up).

These activities connected students with the community and encouraged learner-initiated context and context-specific critical literacy development.

The use of multimodal texts with intersemiotic means amplified the meaning-making potential and increased a sense of empowerment: students could draw on a range of semiotic- (e.g., written and visual texts, sounds, emojis, other languages) and paralinguistic features (e.g., gestures, tone, body language) to reconfigure their imagined identities and relationships with L2 discourse communities (Norton, 2013).

Figure 2. This is part of my culture

For example, Sofía's photographs about her workout routine, the logo "be yourself only better" (Figure 2), and the "there is not excuses for not work out" byline were used to build English language skills and content vocabulary related to hobbies, logos, and colors. When she explained her rigorous workout routine (i.e., she worked out at 4 am daily and then tended to her family and work responsibilities) and added that having a consistent routine can "force to learn English!", she inspired others to reflect on their L2 socialization. In this discussion, many students attributed their L2 learning investment to support from families and employers.

Gaspar pointed to the "Just Do It" slogan on his shoes and said that his English speaking skills gained his manager's recognition. He was often asked to serve as a translator at this workplace. Thus, feeling legitimized in social spaces can enable ELs to take on positive identities and legitimize themselves in a discourse community (Norton, 2013).

Students reportedly relied on their mobile devices to comment on visuals using emojis or short sentences in English or Spanish and to revisit and translate postings while waiting in the doctor's office or at the grocery store. Conversations by participatory mobile learning and linguistic and other semiotic features (e.g., emojis) emphasize that ELs bring valuable insights, strategies, and out-of-school experiences to negotiate L2 identities while developing multimodal literacy and L2 skills. Feeling legitimized in the workplace and/or the classroom can empower positive L2 identity negotiations. Thus, the learner-created or found visuals seem to contextualize meaning making strategies among students.

Another class dialogue inspired by a learner-found linguistic landscape (Figure 3) illustrates how Maria, a student in her early stages of L2 development, drew on peer help, translation, and visual means to facilitate her meaning-making.

Figure 3. I miss my country

Maria: "Rosalina, how you say (point to flag).... la bandera?"
Rosalina: "Oh, how …. say… Castel, cómo se dice...?."
Castel: "Uh….. flag. Yes, flag."
Maria: "Uh flaaaag."
Rosalina: "Flag. FLAG." (spells it out and then writes it on a paper for Maria)

Students reportedly relied on their mobile devices to comment on visuals using emojis or short sentences in English or Spanish and to revisit and translate postings while waiting in the doctor's office or at the grocery store. Conversations mediated by semiotic resources and familiar content contextualize meaning-making strategies and emphasize that ELs bring valuable insights and out-of-school experiences to express their social positions and develop multimodal and multilingual literacies and L2 fluency skills.

In this excerpt, Maria exhibits learning strategies by pointing to the object to elicit the meaning of the word "flag" and reaching out for peer support in Spanish language. Although she positions her peer, Rosalina, as an expert, Rosalina takes on the mediator role and extends the language broker position to Castel.

Feeling legitimized in the workplace and/or the classroom can empower positive L2 identity negotiations. Thus, the learner-created or found visuals seem to contextualize meaning making strategies among students.

Following the clarification of the requested vocabulary, Maria acknowledges his expertise by repeating the concept. At the same time, Rosalina attempts to reclaim her expertise by spelling out the word to Maria. This interaction reveals that access to Spanish language can promote vocabulary learning, various identity positions, and language awareness. After discussing the vocabulary related to learner-created visuals, I noticed continued use of peer-to-peer learning and Spanish language assets to mediate writing captions for these illustrations. Aceess to these resources seemed to reduce frustration and anxiety for students with limited emerging L2 proficiency abilities and enabled them to communicate. As shown in the annotation that accompanied the collage, Maria recycled the new vocabulary (flag) (Figure 3) to develop her narrative.

Through the repetition of the verb "miss", the "my" possessive pronoun, the cognate for "photograph" (la fotografía in Spanish), the sentence frame "on the top left corner", and the Spanish cuatro to denote the four-stringed Venezuelan small guitar, Maria fused English and Spanish to convey her emotional connection to her homeland. These examples validate opportunities to draw on multimodal and multilingual input through translation, visuals, gestures, repetition, and peer mentoring can enrich L2 and content mastery and encourage active learning, risk taking, and identity constitution. Learner-initiated materials can serve as springboards for lessons along with scaffolding strategies, such as pre-teaching vocabulary and using sentence starters can enhance the quality of teaching in multilevel classrooms.

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This study demonstrates that asset-based digital instructional practice transforms teaching, learning, and research. The student-centered experimental methods extended authentic language use while enabling participants to discursively forge their belonging as multilingual speakers, role models, teachers, co-researchers, and authors. They also challenged them to investigate rich life experiences and reciprocal interests through portable devices, transcultural and transnational wealth, and chosen communication modes— oral, visual, gestural, and tactile senses. Through these activities, they tackled meaningful issues and expressed their connection to their home-, Latinx-, and L2 communities. Such perspectives are typically underappreciated in traditional classrooms.

The cooperative nature of this project enabled me to uncover how language and power are embedded in diverse social contexts that include (social)media messages, (non)public signs, and classroom instructions. As this investigation unfolded, I have deepened my understanding of pedagogies to systematically conceptualize students as multicompetent and to co-construct a an equitable learning space with the ELs and the EVO learning community. In addition to knowledge of L2 acquisition theory, research, and teaching principles, I have learned that I needed to open myself for ongoing feedback and observations.

To anchor my pedagogy within the students' wants and realities, I intentionally minimized the teacher-student power dynamics. Specifically, I took on the observer role during field trips and the language learner role in class by asking volunteers to explain words in Spanish language, a language I was not fluent in, and recasting these words. To promote multicompetent identity development, I displayed learners' multimodal and multilingual texts in the classroom, used bilingual dictionary, and relied on a community member as cultural ambassador. These strategies seemed to motivate ELs to problematize the native-and- non-native-speaker dichotomy and monolingual practices and take on translator or mentor positions.

Honoring students' voices and sociocultural assets in the classroom can cultivate authorship, interconnectedness, and mutual trust. Within this framework, lessons become highly relevant, widening the application to shared practices. Normalizing adequate use of sociocultural wealth and community-engaged (digital)learning might not be afforded in English-only, teacher-centered classrooms and teacher development programs. Thus, instructors have a vital role to strategically integrate these resources to humanize experiences and broaden alternative forms of knowledge.

When I asked for feedback about these means, most ELs recognized that consistent use of visuals, translanguaging, and mobile learning empowered them to carefully examine texts, tell stories, build relationships, and reflect on their experiences. Through field trips and mobile activities, participants could communicate their work to family members and an online audience. Nevertheless, students with more exposure to L2 communication perceived the use of Spanish as interference with their L2 mastery. Few found occasions to sustain L2 conversations given their self-reported inclination to primarily socialize with Spanish speakers, suggesting that further longitudinal studies should explore the integration of diverse repertoires to facilitate learning.

While the instructional approaches in this study traversed diverse literacy and linguistic skills and effective L2 socialization, there were a number of obstacles in this study. In absence of outside instructional observations and follow-up interviews with participants, it is difficult to evaluate the long-term impact of this project. Given the specific instructional context (e.g., community-based classroom with limited resources) and participant profiles (Latinx LESLLA learners with shared Spanish language knowledge and extended US residence), the limited number of participants, and the sporadic course attendance, these findings may not be generalizable to other learning communities.

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Transforming L2 learning and identity negotiation through linguistic landscaping and field trips
Andrea Enikő Lypka
University of South Florida, United States of America

Mediating linguistic learning through feedback delivery in pronunciation activities

Sidney Martin Mota,
Official School of Languages in Tarragona
(EOI Tarragona)

I am a teacher of English language at the Official School of Languages in Tarragona (www.eoitarragona.cat) and an online tutor at the *Institut Obert de Catalunya* (ioc.xtec.cat/educacio/eoi).

I am interested in how students and teachers deal with feedback delivery and reception in both face-to-face and online environments, more specifically in language learning. I am also interested in pronunciation in second language learning and teaching. I have participated twice in the *Classroom-based Research for Development* course (EVO 2017 and EVO 2018) and have very much enjoyed it.

My teaching context

The students enrolled in a B2 blended course at the Official School of Languages. The classroom can sit 30 students at stacking chairs with a tablet arm, which are good for moving around when group work is needed. Both a traditional blackboard and a beamer with a white rollable screen are available. Rooms also have a PC and an audio system.

Figure 1. Room photo at the Official School of Languages in Tarragona.

My story of engaging in research

I first came to know EVO thanks to Birgit Ferran, Educational technologist at the Catalan Department of Education, who sent a mail to all the schools with the information about the EVO 2017 event. There was this course that caught my attention: Classroom-based research. I didn't think twice and joined. One of my main interests is feedback, more specifically finding means to make it more effective. The results stemming from the research has special bearing on my teaching practice, thus allowing me to further test the findings and explore new ideas and always trying to find better ways to help my students in their learning process. Thus, Classroom-based Research is the ideal environment to learn more from other colleagues and from your own students in order to improve one's

teaching practice by doing research in your own classroom. For example, I must thank Beril Yucel, one of the moderators in the course, by suggesting new ways of carrying out my research. Asking me the right questions to move forward. I will give more details about this in the following section: Mentor(s) and peer's support.

Furthermore, the weekly live sessions were very enriching since you could watch peers present their research while receiving comments via the chat room. Here is where technology helped create a community and really made us feel closer. The moderators were very helpful from the very beginning by providing adequate feedback and making you feel like home.

My purpose of research and questions or puzzles

It all began when I noticed that students seem to pay little attention to pronunciation in language classes since they do not see that they make any progress, unlike other areas of language learning such as grammar and vocabulary, which students practice systematically and regularly, especially through compositions.

One of the other challenges I was facing as a teacher is to decide when and how to deliver feedback about pronunciation, which is something Baker & Burri (2016) pointed out in their article. They suggest that teachers need to take into account not only giving feedback but also when and how to provide feedback. As teachers, we all know that feedback is critical, but even more how and when to give it. What could I do? How can I help my students?

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) provides the framework for the design of language syllabus, curriculum, teaching materials and language assessment. The CEFR defines six reference levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2) and classifies language activities into four categories:

Reception (listening and reading), production (writing and speaking), interaction (written and spoken) and mediation. According to the CEFR, mediation is, broadly speaking, carried out by a social agent (user/learner) whose goal is to create bridges and construct meaning.

Teachers and their materials can thus be considered as mediators. As a teacher, my goal is to help students "construct meaning" and make them see that they are actually making progress in pronunciation. I am then acting as a bridge so that students can achieve their goals, thus scaffolding their learning. I designed a tool consisting of a series of evaluation dartboards especially placed across several months which in turn tackle specific areas of pronunciation that have shown to be difficult for L2 speakers. Such a tool has proven to be an effective mediation strategy for language formative assessment with "dialogic" feedback delivery at its core.

My research plan and results

In order to answer the questions *"What could I do? and How can I help my students?"* I designed a tool to help me provide effective feedback to my students and help them see their progression. The tool is an evaluation dartboard. The data I needed to check whether my action was effective were collected using four evaluation dartboards distributed on one single sheet of paper (See Figure 2).

Each dartboard was called a checkpoint. For each end of every axis a specific pronunciation target was chosen through consensus. That is, both teacher and students identified what the main pronunciation issues were after receiving teacher feedback during the first term. Then during the second and third terms, students had to assess their own progress in the four pronunciation areas and do so four times.

The fact that students participate in choosing what areas need to be improved has been very motivating for them and enlightening for me as the instructor of the course. For instance, students showed more interest in knowing how well they were progressing in pronunciation than before. The fact that they had a say in their learning process was a way of engaging and empowering my students.

However, what is critical and even problematic is deciding what pronunciation targets should be dealt with (Lee et al., 2015). In my case, it is not any longer someone with "authority" who says what you have to learn, but targets are negotiated based on the instructor's experience and the students' needs. Also, my goal is not for my students to imitate a native's pronunciation but intelligibility, which is in line with the CEFR recommendations for phonological control.

Between each checkpoint students had to carry out some tasks, for which they received teacher feedback about the four target pronunciation areas. The four areas are: the aspirated stop /t/ in English as in "ten"; the vowel sound in "cut" when written with "o" as in "son, mother, done"; the schwa sound; and the simple past -ed.

Students were informed about the usefulness of the collected data, especially in both helping them in their learning process and in helping me in improving my teaching practice. They were also informed that the results would be presented in academic events, but that their personal details would always be confidential.

How I analysed the data

I needed to quantify my students' perceived improvement in each checkpoint (see Figure 2). Each checkpoint consists of an x and y axis which divides the plane into four quadrants. Each end of the axis represents one of the four target pronunciation areas that students want to improve (the aspirated stop /t/, the vowel sound in "son"; the schwa and the simple past –ed). The intersection of the axes will always be 0% of achievement whilst the end of the axes will represent 100% of achievement.

Figure 2. Photo of evaluation dartboard
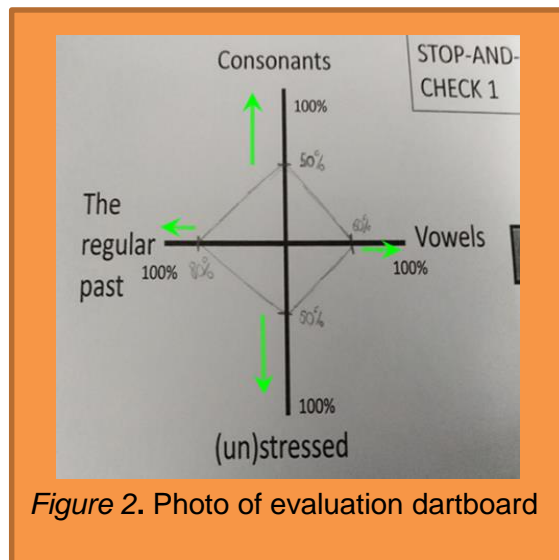
At each checkpoint, students will be asked to judge how well they think they are doing based on the feedback delivered by their teacher. Once they have judged each of the categories, students are asked to join the four points on each axis so as to create a plane, whose area within will hopefully increase as students improve from stop-and-check 1 to 4.

For each category and each student, I then calculated the % of perceived achievement as well as the area of the plane delimited by the four pronunciation targets. Finally, averages for the group were calculated for a quantitative analysis and graphs were created for qualitative analysis.

Mentor(s)' and peers' support

During the experiment, some colleagues in the course gave us some feedback after posting our observations and reports, which proved to be very helpful, especially when feedback was about methodology and data analysis. The fact that the whole community of teacher researchers were connected online greatly helped me since doing research can be a lonely activity at times.

For instance, in week 3, 28 Jan- 2 Feb (EVO 2018) we were asked to answer three questions in order to focus our research. When I posted my answers, Beril Yucel, one of the moderators in the course, posted a list of questions that helped me very much to clarify some aspects of my research. I didn't keep a journal, as she suggested, but I wrote some notes in my Research notebook, especially related to my students' comments while doing the pronunciation tasks in class. Such comments allowed me to understand my students' feelings about their learning process among many other things. Here is Beril Yucel's post on Google Plus on which we conducted our asynchronous communication in the Classroom-Based EVO:

Beril Yucel   30 set.
Hi +sid m . What kind of a grid are you planning to use and for how long are you going to use it? Are you planning to use any other data collection tools like for example a mini questionnaire asking students how they feel about pronunciation and what kind of progress they are making. And perhaps as a teacher you can keep a journal or short notes about your observations about students' performance? Just some suggestions .. Thanks

Figure 3. Example of mentor feedback

It was also great to help and be helped by peers. Additionally, in week 3 28 Jan-2 Feb (EVO 2018), more specifically for activity 3 *How can I…?: Gathering practical answers from other teachers*, one of my colleagues, Giulia Bertagnolio, posted a set of questions about methodology and I sent her some suggestions. Here is the brief though effective interaction between my colleague and me:
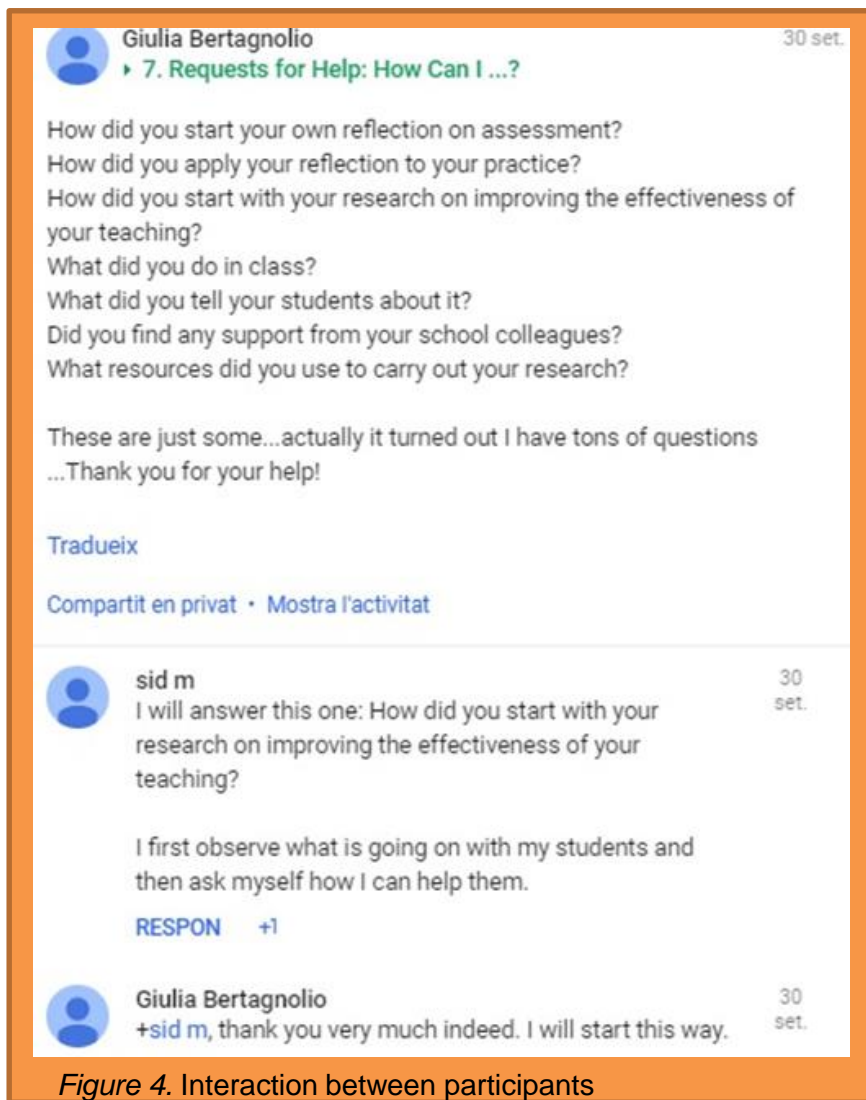
Figure 4. Interaction between participants

Following is an example of me receiving help from my mentors and peers after I posted a question about ways of encouraging my students to read more in a foreign language. I received loads of tips, which helped me for my daily teaching practice.I would like to thank the following people for their very practical ideas: Silvia Rettaroli, Brenda E. Paz, Beril Yucel, Beth Evans, Tea Horvatic and Richard Smith. Here is a screenshot of the interaction:
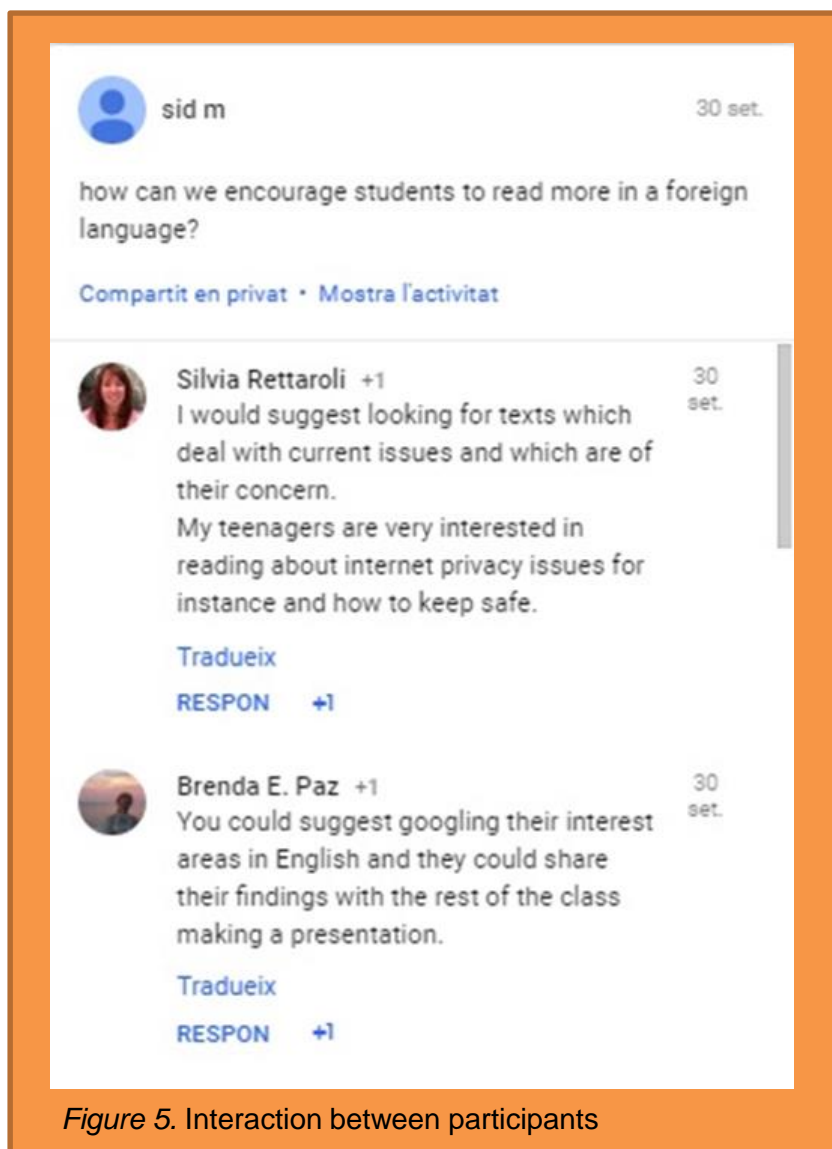
Figure 5. Interaction between participants

Results

What could I do? and How can I help my students? were the two questions that triggered my piece of research. Let us see how effective the tool was. In general, the 14 students who completed the four checkpoints believed that they were actually improving. Figure 6 shows such improvement. X-axis represents the four checkpoints roughly set during the last two terms of the course. Y-axis represents the average area (calculated in square units), comprised within the four points in the evaluation dartboard and which gradually increased from checkpoints 1 to 4. In checkpoint 1 the area is 4446 square units; in checkpoint 2 it is 5266 square units; in checkpoint 3 it is 7056 square units; and in checkpoint 4 it is 9569 square units.

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However, a closer look at the data shows that improvement varies depending on the pronunciation target. Figure 7 is a bar graph whose x-axis represents the four checkpoints (SC1, SC2, SC3 and SC4) for each pronunciation target (the aspirated /t/; the vowel in "done"; the schwa in unstressed vowels; and the -ed for the past simple. The y-axis are the group's average scores for each category and at each checkpoint (0-100%), based on and after receiving their teacher's feedback. Improvement is higher in -ed, followed by aspirated /t/, the "o" in "done" and finally the schwa in unstressed syllables, thus indicating that there are some weak areas. I then designed some extra tasks targeting them.

In the end, a short questionnaire was administered to the students in order to find out what they thought about the tool. The two questions were *Question 1: In a scale from 1 to 5, how well did the tool help you to see that you were actually making progress? (1=it didn't help me at all; 5= it was perfect) and Question 2: In a scale from 1 to 5, would you recommend this tool to anyone? (1=no way; 5= absolutely!).*
Students recommend the tool to anyone (Mean= 4.12) and that thanks to the tool, they see progression in their pronunciation learning path (Mean= 3.7). Both results are positive for teachers and students.

Figure 6. Average area comprised within the four pronunciation targets in the evaluation dartboard.
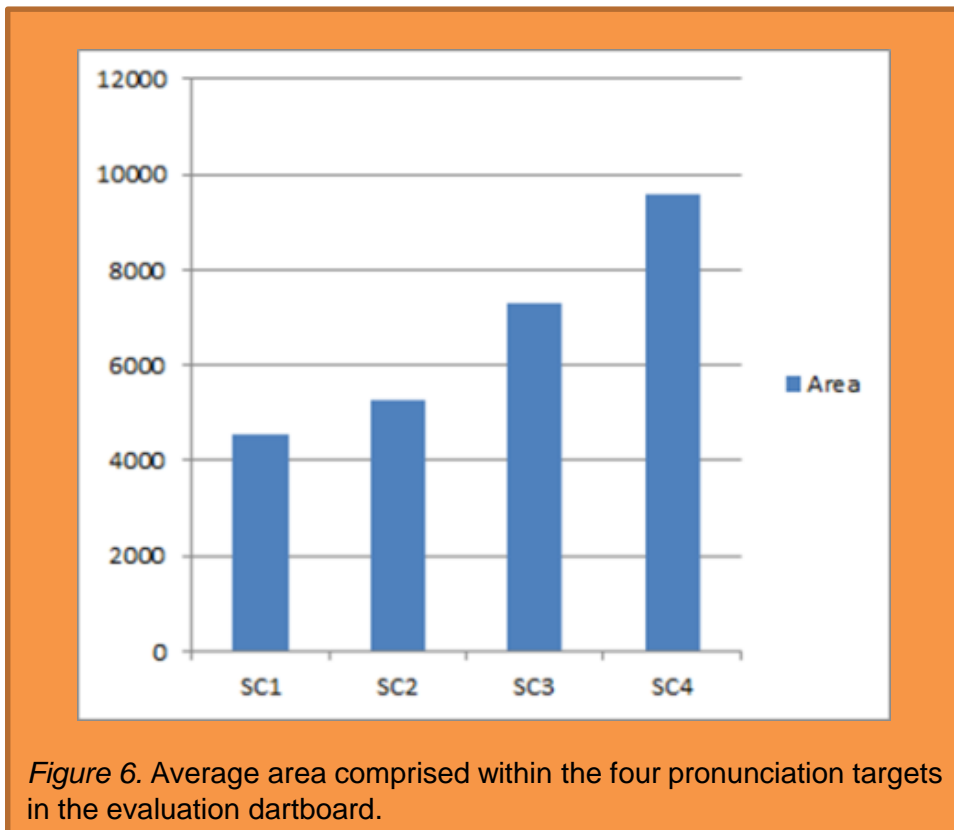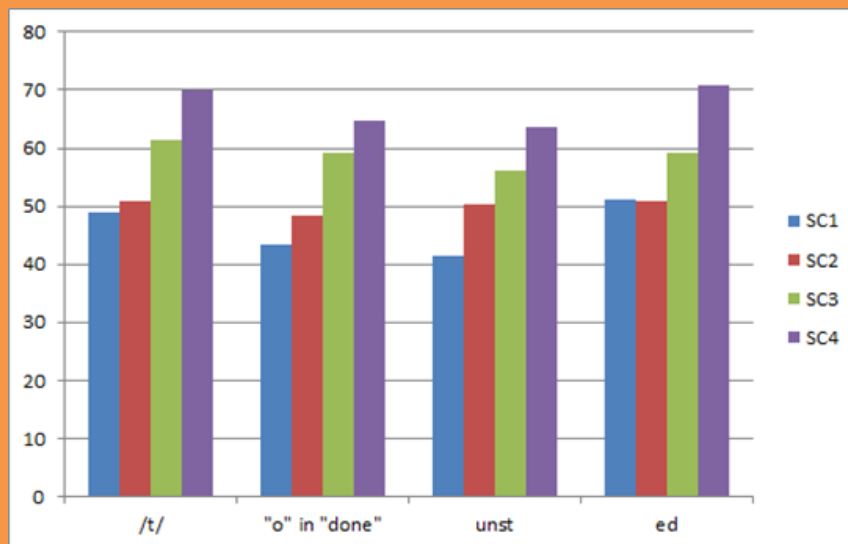
Figure 7. Group's average perceived improvement (%) for each pronunciation target and at each checkpoint (SC).

In general, students who went through the four checkpoints believed that they were actually improving. Such improvement can be seen in how the area comprised within the four target points gradually increased (see Figure 6). However, a closer look at the data shows that improvement varies depending on the pronunciation target (see Figure 7). Improvement is higher in -ed, followed by aspirated /t/, the "o" in "done" and finally the schwa in unstressed syllables. In addition, a short questionnaire was administered to the students in order to find out what they thought about the tool, the results of which are in Figure 8. The two questions were Question 1: In a scale from 1 to 5, how well did the tool help you to see that you were actually making progress? (1=it didn't help me at all; 5= it was perfect) and Question 2: In a scale from 1 to 5, would you recommend this tool to anyone? (1=no way; 5= absolutely!).

Figure 8 shows that students would recommend the tool to anyone (Mean: 4.12) and that thanks to the tool, they see progression in their pronunciation learning path (Mean: 3.7). Both results are positive for teachers and students.

Results
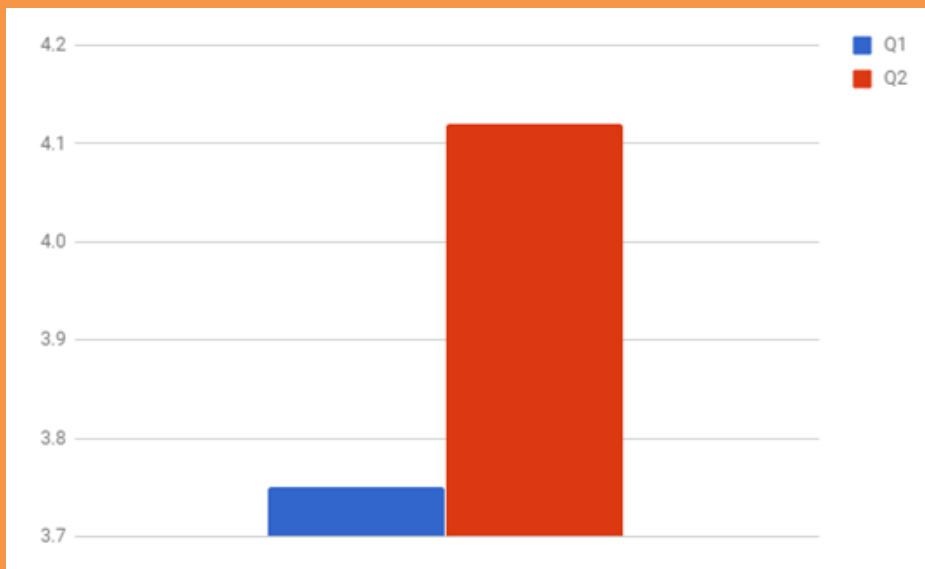
Figure 8. Comparison of the two survey questions.

REFLECTION

During my research many questions arose concerning the role of the teacher as facilitator/mediator of learning, more specifically when teaching pronunciation. One of the difficulties a teacher encounters when delivering new content is that of mitigating the Ebbinghaus forgetting curve. Once a new piece of information is delivered, it is bound to be forgotten unless there is something that helps the learner retain it. Here is where the teacher needs to be creative so as to find ways to help students retain what they have just learnt.

My way to mitigate forgetting was to create a set of evaluation dartboards which were distributed along the course and were in turn used as reminders of what the goal was, thus creating a habit in the form of spaced reviews, which is one of the strategies mitigating the forgetting curve.

Interestingly, students became more goal-oriented thanks to this tool, and thus were able to see progress in their learning. Both students and I knew exactly what we wanted from each other. In addition, I started to read more literature related to feedback delivery as a tool for mitigating the Ebbinghaus forgetting curve and paid more attention to when and at what intervals is feedback delivered since it does have an effect on retention apart from other variables which will definitely be explored. I'd better start reviewing my notes lest I start forgetting what I've learnt myself!

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Mediating linguistic learning through feedback delivery in pronunciation activities
Sidney Martin Mota,
Official School of Languages in Tarragona (EOI Tarragona)

A Fairer Assessment in Oral Activities

Josefa Torres Oviedo

Salvador Vinuesa School, Córdoba; Andalusia (Spain)

My teaching context

The research was developed at Salvador Vinuesa School in Córdoba; Andalusia (Spain). It is an Infant and Primary Bilingual School. It has three lines except in the last course (6th) in Primary stage there are four lines. The average is about 25 students per class.

The classrooms are generally well-equipped with projectors, digital boards, computers for all students and connection to the internet. The classroom shown below is of a colleague of mine who has collaborated and cooperated with me in this research.

I am an English teacher. I teach English at primary, secondary, and, bachelor levels, plus to adults as a private teacher in one to one and small group sessions. Furthermore, I teach English as a first foreign language, Spanish language, literacy, science, art and physical education in public primary schools (students from 6 to 12 years old) and in schools which are supported by the Government in Andalusia and Extremadura Community in Spain. Teaching is my **PASSION.**

The research was conducted with 23 pupils who were in the last course of Primary Education, that is to say, 6th course. They are students at the age of 11 or 12 years old. Pupils were selected out of four classrooms at the same level (6th A, 6th B, 6thC, 6th D) in an inclusive and mixed abilities group. A student is diagnosed with autism disorder. We work by using an eclectic methodology and students are expected to reach Communicative Competence at the end of the last stage of Primary Education.

My Story of Engaging in Research

I had the great opportunity to join EVO, thanks to Dr. Richard Smith and the British Council. Since 2016, I got information from the British Council newsletter about the webinars given by Dr. Richard Smith which I attended. My main motivation was to

1.   foster my professional development through engaging in conducting exploratory research,
2.   seek alternative approaches to the problems which I often face in my teaching practice and the learning process,
3.   develop strategies I could use, especially in mixed abilities, multicultural, large and, inclusion classrooms including students with autism, high intellectual capacities or those who are extremely shy.

I was very interested in doing research in the EVO community in order to understand, know and share with colleagues around the world, their experiences, knowledge, cultures and other contexts in which English as a foreign language is taught. Moreover, the fact of that in EVO, the research has been carried out from different stages such as teachers who teach in primary and secondary schools, universities and academies has been very enriching as much professionally as personally. From my point of view, teachers must be connected in order to figure out the problems and the necessities found in each stage even in formal and informal contexts.

> Moreover, the fact of that in EVO, the research has been carried out from different stages such as teachers who teach in primary and secondary schools, universities and academies has been very enriching as much professionally as personally.

The impact the other colleagues had on me were, i.e. manage with problems with the use of technologies as apps, create engaging presentations and digital resources, which I found very useful.

I identified my research focus because when I worked in mixed, multicultural, inclusive and large classrooms, I had to face the following problems:

- I was not able to observe all my students at the same time while they were doing oral activities. Sometimes, they used Spanish language and some thought that they were not learning because they were not being corrected when they spoke in pairs or in a small group.

- I also observed that there are students with a very good level in English language; however, their performance sometimes in oral exams was not very good. On the other hand, students got very good results in oral exams even when their level in English language was not very good. I wondered why?

For these reasons, the following questions initiated this research:
1. How can I observe the participation of all students in oral activities?
2. How can students avoid the use of Spanish language in oral activities?
3. How can I overcome the barriers of the lack of vocabulary, idioms, phrasal verbs, etc., and not breakdown the communication?
4. How can I get the students to make a major effort to communicate in the target language? How can I draw the students' attention to oral communicative activities?
5. Are the students are interested in oral communicative activities?
6. How can I overcome the limiting beliefs about their performance in oral activities?

My Research Plan and Results

I collected the data by using different tools:

1. Direct observation as they conducted the role-plays (e.g. their pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, patterns, body language and relationships).
2. Teacher´s notebook; I took short notes about what I observed and the mistakes that they made. Later or in the following day I explained to them what they should improve.
3. Peer assessment and monitoring.
4. A questionnaire about the use of Plickers.

The research Process

Figure 1 shows the process of data collection using Plickers.

Figure 1. Research process

Use of the Plickers application

- The use of different devices, for instance digital dictionaries, digital boards, mp4s, mobiles and video recordings. The students used digital dictionaries in order to look up the words or idioms while acting out. At the same time, they checked the pronunciation, phonetics, etc. This allowed them not to breakdown the communication, especially because they don't have a good command of the English language yet.
- Mobiles were used to record the role-plays and then these recordings were seen by the whole class on the digital board. The recordings were made by peers during the lessons and nearly every day while the research was carried out, about a month.

Students were advised to use the mp4 to watch and listen videos individually so that they could improve their skills.

The students carried out the oral activities in pairs or small groups in a collaborative and cooperative way. While some pupils acted out in role-plays, simulations or freer production activities, other students recorded their classmates with their mobile phones. They acted as peer-assessors, monitoring and recording their classmates, and giving verbally, a feedback to their peers about their mistakes, avoiding the use of Spanish language because they recorded their classmates. Then all these video recordings were seen by the students in the classroom as a whole activity and they received an oral feedback about their performance both from their peers and from me.

Finally, the students did a project related to English as a foreign language and the culture called 'RIEGA TU CULTURA' (water your culture). A "Cordobës Patio" was created in paper where the role-plays were recorded by students.

Every year in May, the city of Córdoba in Andalusia celebrates its famous Courtyards Festival, a tradition which was declared a part of our World Heritage by UNESCO in 2012 during which many of the courtyards or 'Patios' are open to visitors for a few days. The festival is a competition.

Figure 2. Patio decor

Ethical Considerations

Since the research was going to be published along with children´s images, the other colleagues and the school would see them, so it was necessary to follow some steps. First of all, I had to inform the headmistress and ask for her consent. Secondly, the headmistress had to inform the region bilingual coordinator and the inspector area. All of them gave their consent and congratulated us for the initiative. Finally, I elaborated a letter in order to inform the children´s parents and asking for permission of the children´s images in photos and videos. In addition, the headmistress, my colleague and I had a meeting with the children´s parents to inform them and respond to some doubts, i.e. what, how, when and where the research was going to be published. The parents were delighted to the initiative because they saw their sons and daughters very enthusiastic. A mother asked us how we got her son to act, since this student is extremely shy. Not only did he want to participate but he was also highly motivated.

How I Analyzed the Data

The main way that I analyzed the data was with video recordings of the students while they were acting. These recordings allowed me to observe and analyze the behavior and language used by the students. At the same time, I checked if the students used Spanish. The recordings were recorded by other students who acted as peer-assessors and monitors. Furthermore, the use of the teacher´s notebook, observation notes and Plickers app helped me to analyze the data too. Finally, the students answered a written questionnaire which had questions related to their experiences, beliefs, learning during the research and about the topics of the course books in which they were interested, or beliefs in the use of that topic in daily-life communicative situations.

Mentor (s) and Peer (s) Support

The live sessions had vital importance. Not only were they inspiring, but they also helped me learn how to plan, explore, analyze, etc., by guiding me towards the different steps needed to carry out my research. All these live sessions were given by experts in the teacher research department.

The support of Dr. Richard, all the mentors, the interaction among peers helped me to get rid of many doubts and encouraged me. Also, I would like to highlight the support of my personal mentor Ruben Mazzei because his comments, as this one, "Hi Pepa, your questions are very clear, and you also mention the use of instruments to collect the evidence (devices to record). I think students as assessors are a good option because it is a way to involve/ engage them in their learning" were very motivating. I presented my research plan in the final webinar of EVO. Even though it was a great challenge for me, thanks to Ruben Mazzei I felt confident and capable of doing it. Also, the kind words of Asli Saglam: "Happy to have you on board" along with some other peers' comments.

Result

Observing the participation of all students in oral activities

With the use of video recordings, I could see them later and I was able to observe all the students while they did the oral activities. The students felt that they were learning due to the feedback I gave them after I had seen the recordings. In addition to the videos, all students in the classroom got involved by initiating a new discussion and sharing the opinions about the performance and how they could get better.

Avoiding the use of Spanish language in oral activities

As the students were recorded, assessed and monitored by other classmates and knew that the videos were going to be seen by the all students of the class and me, they did not use the Spanish language.

Overcoming the barriers of language

Very often it is very difficult to maintain a conversation or carry on freer production activities or tasks when the students do not have a good command of the target language, especially with young learners. For this reason, mobiles and digital dictionaries are an invaluable tool in the foreign language teaching and learning process. They could access meanings of the words they did not know, easily and nearly without any interruptions and carry on the conversation

Drawing the students' attention to oral communicative activities

If we, as foreign language teachers, want students to be interested in communicative activities, we must provide them with topics they talk to their friends about. I mean those which they are really interested in and often talk to their friends, classmates, etc. about. Many courses books deal with topics which the students never talk about in daily-life situations and are not interested at all, such as the weather.

To figure out the students´ interests about topics I did an interview and a questionnaire for the students with the help of the Plickers application. Figure 3 shows the results. At the same time, they responded to some questions about their experience of the research. Plickers app is a tool that the teachers can use to collect data or to do assessments in real-time.
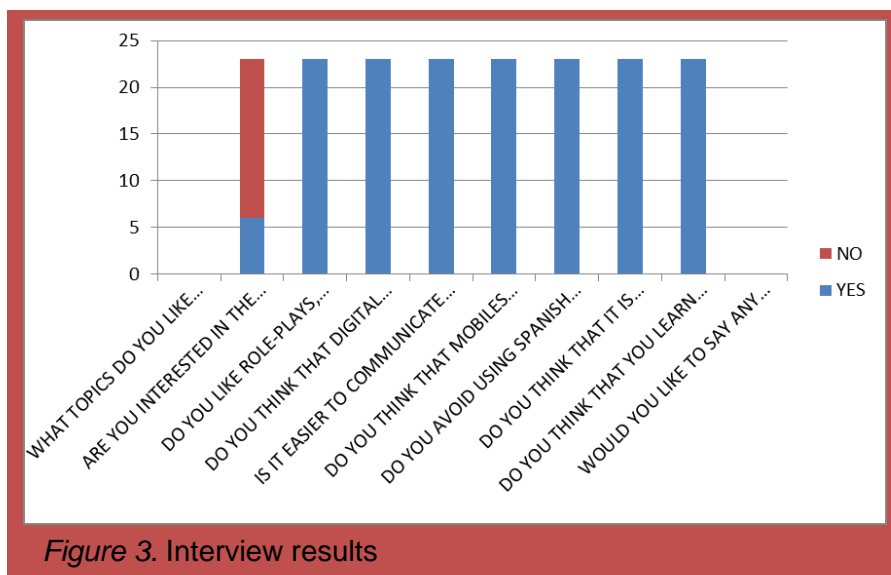
Figure 3. Interview results

Overwhelming majority of student response indicated positive attitudes towards use of mobiles. Also students indicated that they thought using communicative activities enhanced their learning.

REFLECTION

Many, were the challenges I faced during the research engagement, both from a personal and professional point of view, even an anecdote too. On a personal level, I had to overcome some doubts, worries and some fears. Professionally, I was sometimes only a step forward of the students, such as when they had to record the videos. I indicated to them the steps that they had to follow. I had to see many tutorials about the different ways to record videos (30fps, 60fps, 4k), reduce videos, add a video to another and, how to get better sound in a video. I overcame all these challenges by different ways, for instance with more professional development such as watching tutorials and, looking for information from different sources.

Along with my career, I have always been really interested in how to get better at my teaching practice and how to help my students achieve their objectives, paying special attention on literacy in young learners and foreign language learning on different levels.

I consider that teacher researchers have vital importance at all levels in education and in all subjects. Personally this research has had a huge impact on me and my students.

Impact on me

- I started to understand that research could be a tool that we can must use in our teaching more often.
- I have learned how to carry out a research and the different steps that I must follow.
Impact on students

- The students learned what research is and how to use it in order to understand themselves in their own learning process.

On the other hand, at the beginning they did not want to be recorded. They felt uncomfortable. Though only a few days later, they started to get highly motivated and demanded more and more recordings, they said:

> "We are going to try again because I have made a mistake or because I can do it better"

They started to overcome their limiting beliefs about their performance in oral activities. At the same time, parents and other school colleagues were very motivated to create a warm environment. It is known that cognitive processes and linguistic competence or speaking are strictly related. But the big question I asked myself is:

> "Should we, as English teachers, assess only the real knowledge of the language? On the contrary, should some cognitive aspects be assessed too?"

What I am trying to say is that the type of assessment in oral activities nowadays is not the fairest, for students.

Finally, regarding the oral activities and the way in which we carry them out in the classroom should be changed if we want the students to feel self-esteemed and comfortable psychologically, and the video recordings are an excellent resource, like mobiles. Tests and questions can be made by teachers using web tools like Plickers. It is a free app and it can be used with mobiles and tablets. Moreover, giving all the students a chance to participate and engage, plus making it very fun, dynamic and highly motivating.

Last but not least, I will sustain the positive impacts that I gained from this research by putting in practice whatever I do in my daily teaching. To ensure sustainability, the best way will be to engage the students in research.

Drawing on my research results:

> Oral activities should not be assessed only in the exam which may last a few minutes and that it should be the teacher who interacts with the students. I believe that it is impossible to demonstrate all of an individual's knowledge in such a short time. To be honest, recordings might provide the teachers and students with authentic information to do a good job and a fairer assessment with. This is our responsibility and one right that our students have. Last but not least, I will sustain the positive impacts that I gained from this research by putting in practice whatever I do in my daily teaching. To ensure sustainability, the best way will be to engage the students in research. It becomes a habit among the students.

Appendix 1

The queries about the questionnaire are as follows:

1. Do you like role plays, simulations, plays, etc.? Please explain.

2. Do you think that digital dictionaries are easy to use? Please explain.

3. Do you think that digital dictionaries are useful to learn English? Please explain.

4. Is it easier to communicate in English when you can use a digital dictionary? Please explain.

5. Do you think that mobiles are a good tool to learn a foreign language? Please explain.

6. Do you avoid using Spanish language in communicative oral activities when a classmate is assessing or recording you? Please explain.

7. Do you think that it is important you are recorded while you are talking? Please explain.

8. Do you think that you learn about possible mistakes when you watch the recordings? Can you explain it or give an example?

9. Are you interested in the topics of your English book?

10. What topic or topics do you like best?

Self and Peer Assessment as Alternative to Teacher Assessment in Large EFL Classroom

Muhammad Rakibul Hasan,

Padma College, Bangladesh

My teaching context and classroom

I teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to undergraduate young adult and adult students and the classrooms in my college are arranged with whiteboard, fixed high and low benches.

The main challenges of conducting classes in my college are management and assessment in extra-large classrooms and lessening the use of mother tongue in monolingual context. To cope with these challenges, I usually adapt new exercises, practices and evaluation procedure with the existing lessons.

Muhammad Rakibul Hasan, Lecturer in English, with over six years of experience in TESOL at undergraduate level in Bangladesh. Possess MA & BA Honours in English and TESOL Certificate.

Photo 1. Participants (Source: Author)

My story of engaging in research

I am an EFL Teacher from Bangladesh with experience in teaching at undergraduate level. I felt quite enthusiastic to be a part of Classroom-based Research for Professional Development EVO Project 2018 as I wanted to be a part of an initiative having teacher researchers, experienced mentors and moderator(s) from all over the world.

In large classrooms, it was not possible for me to assess all of the learners' writing practices due to shortage of time and so I decided to apply alternative assessments e.g. self-assessment and peer assessment. Self-assessment is "a reflective process in which learners evaluate their own work based on pre-set criteria" and in peer assessment, "learners evaluate each other's work, using pre-set guidelines" (Opp-Beckman, Klinghammer, 2006, p. 104). Brown (2004) stated that self-assessment and peer assessment ensure learners' autonomy and intrinsic motivation and peer assessment is "one arm of a plethora of tasks and procedures within the domain of learner-centered and collaborative education" (p. 270). But Brown (2004) also took account the drawback of 'subjectivity' and said, "Students may be either too harsh on themselves or too self-flattering, or they may not have the necessary tools to make an accurate assessment" (p. 270).

I decided to conduct the direct assessment with grading or scoring of my students' classroom writing performances by the student him/herself, as well as by the peer(s) in groups "immediately or very soon after the performance" (Brown, 2004, p. 271) or in next class. I aimed to understand the applicability of self/peer assessment as there was a chance for variability of self/peer grading or scoring and my focus was to minimize the variability. I provided learners with rubric and relevant directions for scoring and I divided students into upper and lower level of language proficiency for the purposes of peer assessment.

My purpose of research and questions or puzzles

My research question(s) are given below:

1. Is direct self/peer assessment for the evaluation of my students' writing practices a possible alternative to teacher assessment in large EFL Classroom when teacher assessment is too time-consuming?

2. What should I do if there is a chance of variability of scoring, to minimize the variability?

My research plan and results

How I collected the data

I used three types of data collection tools. The tools and procedures are discussed below:

a) Essay writing: The total number of 47 participants (undergraduate students of my college) were engaged in direct self and peer assessment of essay writing practice. After completion of writing, the students were engaged in groups having three members with different language proficiency to score the writing

practices following a simple criterion. So each writing practice was given scores by two peers, then by the student him/herself, and finally taken by me (the teacher) to evaluate. To understand the effectiveness and scoring variability, I compared the four categories of scoring: peer grading by lower level of students, peer grading by upper level of students, self-grading and teacher grading. I adapted a simplified rubric (see Table 2 in Appendix) so that student could understand them easily and I could write them swiftly on black/whiteboard as printing and distributing paper hand out was not possible.

b. Student questionnaire: I made a questionnaire to understand learners' perception of self and peer assessment. The questionnaire had ten simple statements which participants (35 undergraduate students of my college) agreed, disagreed or marked as undecided.

c. My classroom observation notes: I observed my students when they were engaged in self-assessment and peer assessment in groups and I took notes on the difficulties they faced and what kind of assistance and change they wanted.

I conducted the research under the Classroom-based Research for Professional Development EVO Project 2018. I posted the research particulars five times from January to February in 2018 on Google+ community page of EVO 2018 for discussions and feedback from mentors and participant researchers and finally reported about the findings of the research to the moderators and mentors of the project. I got oral permission or consent from my employer for the classroom based action research work. Anonymity of students and colleagues was guaranteed. The research benefitted me, my students and my colleagues; EFL Teachers, textbook writers and ELT material developers would also be affected or benefited whether they read the paper.

How I analyzed the data

The three types of primary data are analyzed below:
a.   Assessment marks statistics of essay writing:

The assessments were recorded in five categories as given below:

i. First peer assessment (PA1) marks by student of lower level of language proficiency (LLS) who got grade A- / B in English (compulsory) in Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examinations.
ii. Second peer assessment (PA2) marks by student of upper level of language proficiency (ULS) who got Grade A+ / A in English (compulsory) in Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examinations.
iii. Average of first and second peer assessment (PA1 : PA2)
iv. Self-assessment (SA) marks.
v. Teacher Assessment (TA) marks (by me)

The teacher assessment (TA) marks was considered as the standard. The appropriateness of first peer assessment (PA1), second peer assessment (PA2), average marks of first and second peer assessment (PA1:PA2), and self-assessment (SA) depended on their variance with teacher assessment (TA) (see Figure 1).
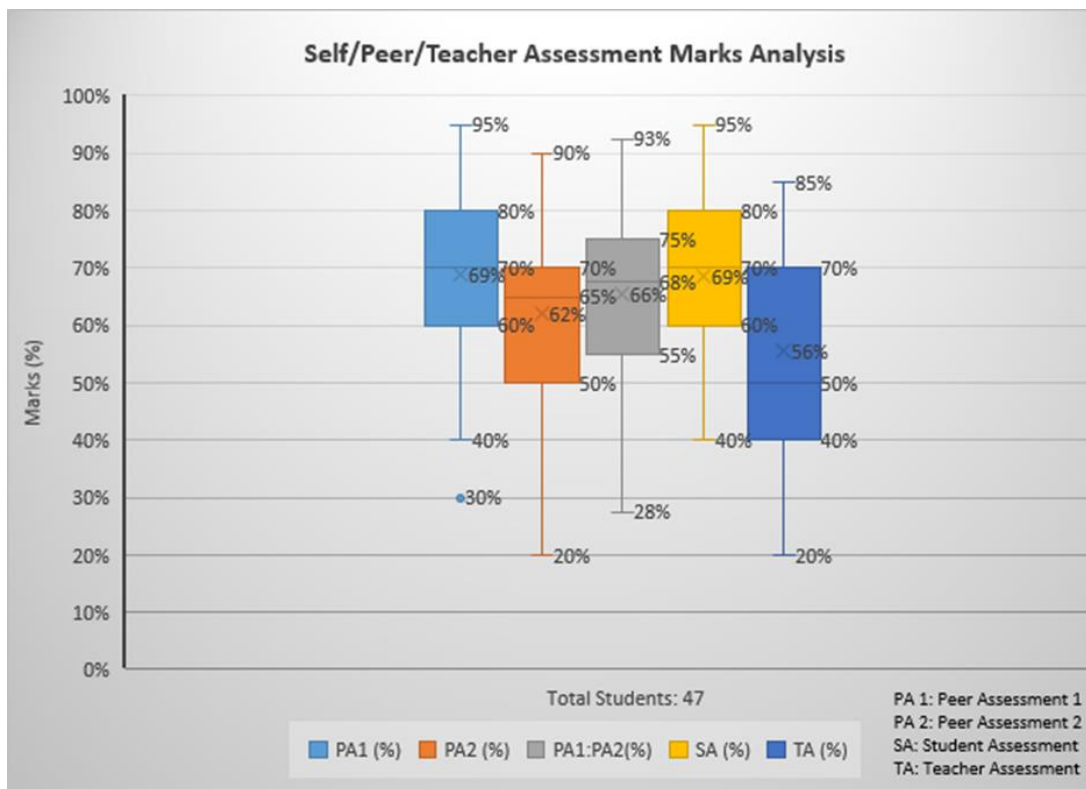
Figure 1. Self/peer/teacher assessment scoring ranges adapted from the summary of scores table (see Appendix)

The scoring ranges in Figure 1 adapted in excel from Table 1 (see Appendix) shows that second peer assessment (PA2) marks range (20%-90%) by the students of upper level of language proficiency (ULS) was closest to teacher assessment (TA), marks range 20% to 85%; the second closest one to teacher assessment (TA) marks range was the average marks range of first and second peer assessment - PA1:PA2 (28% to 93%). First peer assessment (PA1) and self-assessment (SA) marks ranges were same (40% to 95%), which differed most from teacher assessment (TA) marks range.

b. Students' response to the questionnaire:

Total 35 students (SS) participated in the questionnaire and they responded as 'strongly agree' (SA), 'agree' (A), 'disagree' (D), 'strongly disagree' (SD) or 'undecided' (U) with the ten statements written in easy and simple language. Students' responses to the questionnaire are shown in percentage (%) below.

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Table 1. Students' response to questionnaire

Statements	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Undecided %
1.Student assessment (self/peer) assessment is very helpful for my learning.	50	34			06
2.I feel confident when I assess/edit my classmate's writing practice.	3	97			
3.I feel happy when my classmate assesses/edits my writing.	8	80			12
4.I think peer assessment is better than teacher assessment.			60		40
5.My assessments of my classmate's writing practices are almost always appropriate.		31		57	12
6.My classmate's assessments of my writing practices are almost always appropriate.		74	08		17
7.Assessments of writing by two classmates are more accurate than the single one.	20	68			12
8.I feel more confident when a rubric is given for self/peer assessment?	77	20			03
9.I feel puzzled without a rubric to assess my classmate's writing.	31	57			03
10.I learn new things when I assess/edit my classmate's writing.	37	52	08		03

c. My notes on classroom observation:

I observed the following in my class:

- My students were confused primarily to assess and to be assessed but gained the confidence very fast.

- The students with upper level of language proficiency were faster and more influential than lower proficient learners in self/peer assessment.

Mentor(s) and Peer's Support

I got remarkable support and suggestions from the moderator(s), mentor(s) and participant peer researchers of EVO Project 2018 to find the research focus, to sort relevant research questions and to choose the right data collection tools and procedures. When I shared the problem, peer researchers suggested that I use alternative assessment in formative teacher assessment of writing practice in large classes, due to shortage of time. They recommended me relevant books, papers and websites and also shared the procedures, the positive aspects, the relevant challenges and remedies in implementing self/peer assessment.

Results

One of the main findings of the research is that self and peer assessments was accepted by my students as a viable alternative to teacher assessment. My observation and the questionnaire revealed that students perhaps felt puzzled initially to be engaged in the self- and peer-assessment process, but became confident and motivated when they were properly instructed and were given rubric or criteria for assessment. In addition, the comparison of assessment marks ranges (see Figure 1) and student questionnaire exposed that peer assessment in groups were more reliable than self-assessments and single peer assessment in pairs. Also findings indicate that though students enjoyed self and peer assessment, they thought teacher assessment was more appropriate than self/peer assessment. Finally, most of the students thought that their peer assessments were almost always appropriate, and they learnt new things when they assessed other students' writing.

REFLECTION

The notable challenge of the exploratory research was to elicit the precise information from the participants (subjects). The participating students and teacher researchers tried to please me instead of providing their own feelings, understandings and opinions, and also gave special importance on the classes or tasks or discussions when they were told that their classroom performance information and opinions would be used in a study or research work. I motivated and encouraged them to share their own opinions, and to show usual performance.

The research experience improved my ability to investigate on my own teaching practice, to elicit learners' natural performance and their own opinions for a classroom based action research and to continue the exploratory studies for my professional development.

I comprehended that I might rely on my students when they were properly instructed, and were given the right teaching materials. The study helped me to find the right procedure for implementing self/peer assessment in large classes.

Professional development is a continuous process and I need to practice teaching as 'the teacher as researcher' and to concentrate on adapting the 'experiential knowledge' with my 'received knowledge' (Wallace, 1991, p. 56). I agree with Jenny Johnson (2009) that reading relevant books and articles, peer observation, reflective and exploratory practice, group or individual action research, online community platform, attending conferences and teacher training courses, collaboration and exchange with colleagues, professionals and experts within and out of my educational institution are potential activities which I can do for my continuing professional development (CPD).

'' The research experience improved my ability to investigate on my own teaching practice, to elicit learners' natural performance and their own opinions for a classroom based action research and to continue the exploratory studies for my professional development. ''

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Appendix 1

Note. Std = Student; PA = Peer Assessment, LLS = Lower Level Student (A+, A); ULS = Upper Level Student (A-, B); SA = Self-assessment; TA = Teacher Assessment

Std	PA1 (LLS)	PA2 (ULS)	PA1:PA2	SA	TA	PA1 (%)	PA2 (%)	PA1:PA2 (%)	SA (%)	TA (%)
01	8	7	7.5	8	6	80%	70%	75%	80%	60%
02	5	5	5	5	5	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
03	8	7	7.5	6	6	80%	70%	75%	60%	60%
04	8	7	7.5	7	6	80%	70%	75%	70%	60%
05	8	8	8	7	7	80%	80%	80%	70%	70%
06	8	7	7.5	7	6	80%	70%	75%	70%	60%
07	6.5	7	6.75	8	6	65%	70%	68%	80%	60%
08	8	8	8	8	4	80%	80%	80%	80%	40%
09	9	9	9	9	8	90%	90%	90%	90%	80%
10	9.5	9	9.25	9	8	95%	90%	93%	90%	80%
11	9.5	9	9.25	9	8	95%	90%	93%	90%	80%
12	8	8	8	9.5	8.5	80%	80%	80%	95%	85%
13	6	5	5.5	8	4	60%	50%	55%	80%	40%
14	5	3.5	4.25	4	5	50%	35%	43%	40%	50%
15	6	6	6	6	4	60%	60%	60%	60%	40%
16	8	6	7	9	4	80%	60%	70%	90%	40%
17	6.5	5	5.75	6	4	65%	50%	58%	60%	40%
18	8	7	7.5	6	5	80%	70%	75%	60%	50%
19	7	6	6.5	7	6	70%	60%	65%	70%	60%
20	7	6	6.5	8	5	70%	60%	65%	80%	50%
21	6.5	5	5.75	6	5	65%	50%	58%	60%	50%
22	6	4	5	6	2	60%	40%	50%	60%	20%
23	7	6	6.5	6	3	70%	60%	65%	60%	30%
24	3	2.5	2.75	4	4	30%	25%	28%	40%	40%
25	4	3	3.5	5	4	40%	30%	35%	50%	40%
26	7	7	7	7	5	70%	70%	70%	70%	50%
27	9	6	7.5	9	3	90%	60%	75%	90%	30%
28	7	2	4.5	6	3	70%	20%	45%	60%	30%
29	9	8	8.5	8	5	90%	80%	85%	80%	50%
30	8.5	8	8.25	9	5	85%	80%	83%	90%	50%
31	7	7	7	6.5	7	70%	70%	70%	65%	70%
32	8	7.5	7.75	7.5	8	80%	75%	78%	75%	80%
33	7	6.5	6.75	6.5	7	70%	65%	68%	65%	70%
34	8	7	7.5	8	8	80%	70%	75%	80%	80%
35	3	4.5	3.75	6	5	30%	45%	38%	60%	50%
36	4	5	4.5	5	3	40%	50%	45%	50%	30%
37	4	5	4.5	5	3	40%	50%	45%	50%	30%
38	4	5	4.5	5	5	40%	50%	45%	50%	50%
39	7.5	7	7.25	6	8	75%	70%	73%	60%	80%
40	6.5	7	6.75	6	8.5	65%	70%	68%	60%	85%
41	7	6	6.5	6.5	8	70%	60%	65%	65%	80%
42	7	6.5	6.75	6.5	8	70%	65%	68%	65%	80%
43	7.5	7	7.25	8	7	75%	70%	73%	80%	70%
44	6	5	5.5	5	5	60%	50%	55%	50%	50%
45	7	5	6	7	5	70%	50%	60%	70%	50%
46	8	8	8	7	5	80%	80%	80%	70%	50%
47	6.5	6	6.25	8	6	65%	60%	63%	80%	60%

Appendix 2

Rubrics

Rubric 1 for scoring (to write on whiteboard):

Assessment criteria for essay writing on 'A Natural / Tourist Spot':

a. Content & Organization (-1½ for each point missing)
(Naming & History, Location & Transport, Area & Surrounding, Attractions) : 06 Marks

b. Grammar, Spelling & Punctuation (-½ for each mistake)   : 04 Marks

_____

Total   : 10 Marks

Rubric 2 for scoring (to write on whiteboard):

Assessment criteria for essay writing on 'A Social/Environment Problem':

a. Content & Organization (-½ for each point missing)
   3 Detriments, 3 Causes, 3 Effects, 3 Solutions)   : 06 Marks
3 Grammar, Spelling & Punctuation (-½ for each mistake)   : 04 Marks

_____

Total   : 10 Marks

How Technology is Enhancing the Learning Experience: A Classroom-based Exploratory Action Research on Students' Perceptions

Sharmila Sengupta,

Kailash Vidyamandir, Kolkata, India

My teaching context

I teach in a state-run school for under-privileged students coming from socio-economically backward families. Some of my students are orphans. My school has poor infrastructure and classrooms only have a blackboard for the teacher to utilize. Students do not have mobile devices or computers. To make technology a part of my classes, I bring in my own laptop from time to time. However, this is inconvenient as the classrooms do not have charging points.

English and Geography are the subjects I teach from Grade V (Age: 10-11) to XII (Age: 17-18) and there are about 30-35 students in each of my classes. This is how my classroom looks--a classroom full of happy learners!

Photo 1. Partcipants of the project (Source: Author)

Ms. Sharmila Sengupta teaches English and Geography at Kailash Vidyamandir, Kolkata. A teacher-trainer, facilitator and content developer, she designs and leads workshops for students as well as professionals. Sharmila is an alumna of the Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program (TEA) 2017, sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Earlier she has taught in the Delhi Public School, Army School, Vivekananda Mission School and Sri Shikshayatan College. She has been a primary contributor to the "Quality Teaching Learning Improvement Intervention" of the West Bengal District Primary Education Programme. She has lived and worked in different parts of India and loves reading, cooking, driving and traveling.

I conducted this Action Research (AR) project in Grade 9, which has 32 students. They are 14-15 years old. I teach four English classes of 40-minutes duration per week. The students are first generation English learners and have low proficiency in English. They are eager to learn English but find it difficult as no one speaks the language at their homes. Students have theoretical knowledge of computers and the internet, but as they have no access to these, they lack in practical skills. Hence, they cannot utilize the internet as a resource to further their practice of learning English.

Quite often I have felt that the impact of what teachers do in the classroom is assessed by teachers themselves through their personal reflections only. The students' perception and viewpoint regarding what teachers do in the classroom generally become inconsequential. Whereas, it is the learner who is the main focus in the classroom and it is his viewpoint that should become the primary determinant of how and why the teaching process impacts learning. This view brought me to conduct this exploratory Action Research (AR), where my students' perceptions regarding how technology used in the classroom is impacting their learning experience became the primary focus. According to Burns (2010), "AR involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts" (p. 2). In this AR project, I have explored my own teaching context and have realized that the active involvement of the learners directly in the teaching process not only enhances the learning experience, but also helps the teacher in making further qualitative improvements in the teaching environment.

My classroom

The Grade 9 classroom is lacking in infrastructure—some of the tables and chairs are broken. The classroom is cold in winter, extremely hot in summer. The paint is peeling at places, the floor is full of pits and there is nothing except a blackboard on the wall as teaching tool. The classroom is small and has one tube light and two fans. The classroom is dimly lit and not airy. As the classroom is adjacent to a very busy road there is constant sound of traffic, which forces teachers and students to speak very loudly (otherwise, they would not be audible). Thus, the setting of the classroom is not conducive to learning and getting through to the students is even more difficult for the teachers with all the disruptions and commotion around.

My story of engaging in research

The opportunity to engage in this action research came when I joined the EVO (Electronic Village Online) 2018, an online platform where teachers from around the world were actively engaging in classroom-based research. I got to know about the EVO from one of my online searches. Participating in the EVO helped me in my journey of exploring my own classroom and my students. Engaging in this AR as part of the EVO opened up new avenues for me, allowing me to explore my own classroom in ways that I had never thought of before. How my students were perceiving the teaching techniques I was using in the classroom, was the focus of my research and it helped me to understand the classroom dynamics from new angles.

The EVO helped me develop as a researcher. The constant peer interactions and constructive feedback encouraged me to continue in my research work together with my hectic class schedule. The mentors and organizers of the EVO provided continuous handholding support at all stages. The various resources provided, content shared, videos shown and webinars conducted helped me throughout the EVO research journey.

My purpose of research

Teaching in this school for the past 15 years, I have constantly felt that my students need all the help they can get to master the English language. In my drive to find ways and means to make the class interesting and more meaningful, I have tried various techniques over the years. For the past few years I have tried to incorporate technology at every step. Whether this use of technology was being appreciated by the learners and was actually fruitful, was a thought that often bothered me. This led me to take up the issue as my research question when I started thinking about an AR question to explore.

The research questions

My classrooms do not have anything more than a blackboard. So, I take my laptop to class frequently. I cannot bring the laptop every day to school, as that is very inconvenient. Also, not all the classrooms have charging points. However, I feel my students' attitude changes dramatically whenever I use the device to show them images and videos or do presentations and assessments, their interest levels just shoot up. In no other classes is any form of technology used in the school. The only issue is that without a large screen to display the content, the students find it difficult to see the content. What I find interesting is that even though they have to crane their necks to see the screen, all the students seem to enjoy these classes very much.

Richards and Lockhart (2007) stated, "Some preliminary observation and critical reflection is usually needed to convert a broad concern to an action theme" (p. 27). Observing my students' dramatic change in attitude towards learning whenever technology is being used in the classroom, led me to explore the issue in detail in my AR project for the EVO 2018.

My main exploratory research question around which I did my AR was: What do my students think/feel about use of technology in the classroom? The sub-research questions were:
1. Does it increase their interest level towards learning English?
2. Is it a form of motivation for them?
3. Do they find it easier to understand the text and get better at reading skills if they see visuals through technology?

My research plan

I started to put my research plan in place by deciding on what evidence to gather, and how. I planned to find out whether my students felt motivated and interested when technology is used in the classroom. If so, why? Also, whether they could comprehend the reading material better when using content through technology. My expectation was that the research finding would show a positive co-relation between reading comprehension, motivation and increase in interest levels with the application of technology in my classroom.

Data collection

I collected data both qualitatively and quantitatively, by conducting individual and focus group interviews, through questionnaires and teachers' reflective notes, as shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Data Sources

Available Data Sources
1. Individual student interviews
2. Focus group interviews
3. Teacher's reflective notes
4. Questionnaire

Thus, I had four main data collection tools which when analyzed would help me to arrive at the final findings.

There are 5 examination cycles in the year, when no other work can be done in class. Syllabus related to the examinations is huge too. So, I got very few classes within which I had to adjust the research data collection schedule. Hence, it needed to be planned very well and much in advance. Keeping the Grade 9's examination schedule in mind, I started collecting data in all the classes. Students' interviews (focus groups of 5-6 students each) were conducted over a span of three weeks during the classes, while individual interviews (total 32 interviews) had to be conducted after school.

The focus group interviews took about 8-10 minutes each. These were conducted during class hours when the rest of the students were busy with some writing tasks planned ahead. I must say that the planning ahead of the tasks helped immensely while data collection, as it did not then hamper my tight teaching schedule. I recorded both the individual and focus group interviews on the voice recorder of my mobile device, which helped me later when I was preparing the transcripts. I kept a journal of reflections during the whole process of the EVO, both of my classes as well as of the interview process, as part of my data collection tools.

The questionnaire I prepared for the students to answer individually (See Appendix 1) had both open-ended questions for qualitative data collection and questions with direct response options for quantitative data collection.

Ethical Considerations

I took permission from the head of the institution (the Headmaster) before I started the AR. I asked for students and parents consent before starting the data collection. Realizing that my students, colleagues as well as teachers who read about this classroom-based AR, might benefit from it, I have at all times kept proper record of activities done, and presented the true picture while collecting or analyzing data.

Data analysis

The data collection tools used produced both qualitative and quantitative data types.

Table 2. Data types with collection tools used

	Data Types
Qualitative Data	Transcripts of individual student interviews
	Transcripts of focus group interviews
	Teacher's reflective notes
	Open ended questions in questionnaire
Quantitative Data	Transcripts of individual student interviews
	Transcripts of focus group interviews
	Responses to direct questions in questionnaire

From the questionnaire prepared, I got qualitative data primarily, while the students' interviews (individual and focus group) provided both qualitative and quantitative data. The teacher's reflective notes also provided qualitative data. Transcripts of the voice recordings of the students' interviews and focus group interviews helped to identify the emerging themes, as shown below. The frequency of occurrence of each theme was recorded.

Table 3. Emerging themes with related frequency

Emerging themes	Frequency (f)
Seeing things is better than reading about them	2
Increases concentration	6
Provides motivation	5
Text becomes easier and simpler	6
Makes the text more interesting	7
Better understanding of the text	8
Can remember text easily later	4
I learn things outside the text	3
Technology makes things come alive-blackboard cannot do that	2
Using technology makes me happy	3

Data analysis using tables having different categories and sections helped in assimilating the data and arriving at proper figures. Coding and sequencing the data resulted in proper analysis. Coding was done by finding the main emerging themes from the different data sources analyzed, tabulating the data and then finding the primary emerging themes based on the frequency of occurrence. The secondary emerging themes were also considered while analyzing the data, as shown below.

Table 4. Primary and secondary themes according to frequency of occurrence

Themes	Frequency (f)
Main	
1. Better understanding of the text	8
2. Makes the text more interesting	7
3. Text becomes easier and simpler	6
4. Increases concentration	6
5. Provides motivation	5
6. Can remember text easily later	4
Secondary	(f)
7. Using technology makes me happy	3
8. I learn things outside the text	3
9. Seeing things is better than reading about them	2
10. Technology makes things come alive-blackboard cannot do that	2

From the questionnaire prepared, I got qualitative data primarily, while the students' interviews (individual and focus group) provided both qualitative and quantitative data. The teacher's reflective notes also provided qualitative data. Transcripts of the voice recordings of the students' interviews and focus group interviews helped to identify the emerging themes, as shown below. The frequency of occurrence of each theme was recorded.

Mentors' and peers' support

The EVO platform provided me with timely guidance and support to proceed with this AR project within my classroom. Planning and researching were guided by mentors who gave regular feedback. This helped me to move forward with my plans and decisions. When I was planning the topic to research in my classroom, it was my mentor who helped me narrow down from the broad ideas that I had. She suggested changes and alterations which enabled me to actually find the right direction.

Interactions with peers who were conducting similar classroom-based research allowed me to not only get new ideas, but also improve further on my methodologies. Regular webinars and online resources helped in learning in-depth about various issues related to the research and in organizing and conducting it within the tight schedule of the school curriculum.

Results

Some of the main findings of the research were in line with my expectations, such as: According to my students, the use of technology in the classroom (a) leads to better understanding of the text, (b) makes the text more interesting, (c) makes the text easier and simpler, (d) increases concentration, (e) provides motivation, (f) helps students remember text easily later.

However, the following points, when highlighted by my students, surprised me, as I had not considered them important before. From the students' perspective, these were very significant and relevant points.

i). Using technology makes learners happy
ii). Seeing visuals supporting the text is better than only reading from the course book
iii). Technology makes things come alive- the blackboard cannot do that
iv). I learn things outside the text

The teacher's reflective notes provided some special points which led to observations that were extremely relevant for me and the whole teaching-learning process. These points which came to the forefront after analyzing the data, were both positive and negative in their outcomes. There was a considerable increase in the student attendance with the application of technology in the classroom. This was indeed an outcome which was welcomed by the school authorities as poor attendance happens to be a recurring problem in my school. Slow learners improved—a very positive finding—as it has always been a concern for my colleagues who have tried so many new techniques to help improve the slow learners. However, there was a negative finding too: The teaching process was slowed down. This was definitely going to affect the progress of the syllabus that needed to be completed within the timeframe provided. However, I feel that the positive outcomes are far more and they definitely outweigh the negative one.

A clear picture regarding students' perceptions related to the research questions can be seen emerging from the representation of the analyzed quantitative data. Students' responses recorded during the interviews form the basis of the quantitative data.
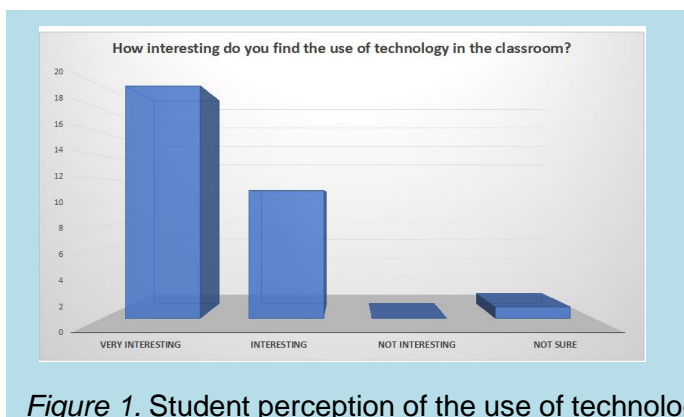

Figure 1. Student perception of the use of technology

Quantitative data collected through individual student interviews was assimilated and analysed to arrive at the values presented here. To the question, "How interesting do you find the use of technology in the classroom?" students were given four response options. Of the total of 32 students, 20 answered that they found use of technology to be "very interesting". 11 students felt it to be "interesting", while no one thought it to be "not interesting". One student was "not sure". Thus, the vast majority of the students unanimously felt that technology use in the classroom was interesting to them.
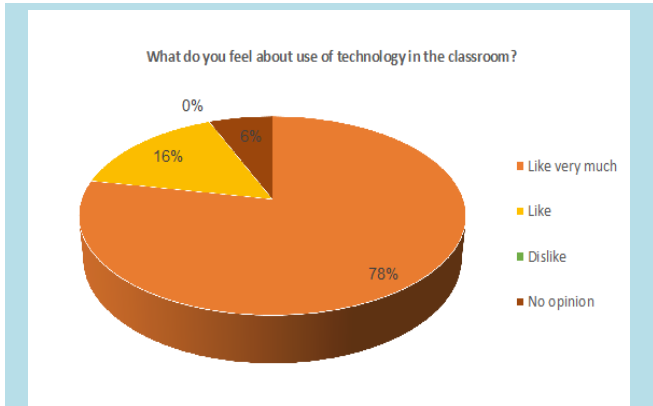
Figure 2. Perceptions of use of technology in class

When students were asked how they feel about use of technology in the classroom majority opted for positive response as illustrated in Figure 2 below. The percentage values presented here were derived by analysing the quantitative data collected during individual student interviews as well as focus group interviews.

Students likes and dislikes were being considered through the question prompt. Analysis of the data showed that while 78% of the students felt that they "liked very much" the use of technology, no one "disliked" it.

As illustrated in Figure 3, quantitative data collected during focus group interviews through the question, "How does technology help you in the classroom?" led to various findings. While all students (n=32) felt that technology led to "better understanding, 30 students felt that it "increases concentration" levels in class. Of the 32 students, 29 students said that technology "provides motivation" and 27 felt that they "remember easily" with the help of technology.

Figure 3. Student responses to "How does technology help you in the classroom?"

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How action research influenced me

Conducting the research helped me realize that my students may have a different perspective to what I think is good for them. Now I know that I can improve as a teacher if I consult my students and ask for their opinions. This project has made me realize that teaching is easier when it is collaborative. Not only has this experience increased my motivation dramatically, but it has also inspired me to work harder. My confidence in exploring my own classroom has increased considerably.

I now feel that I can develop professionally through identifying and then researching such ideas.
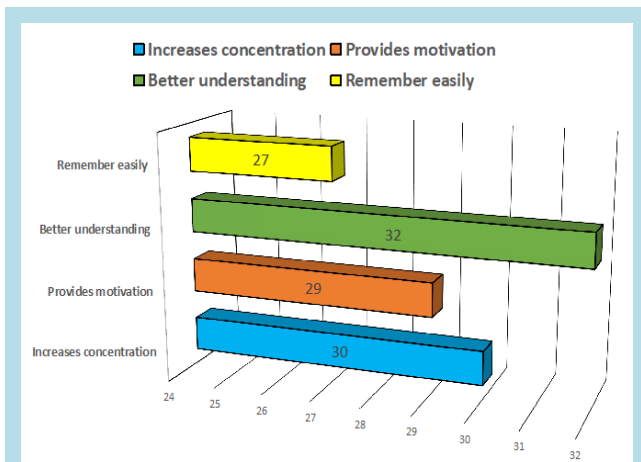
Sharing my research with my colleagues and school authorities was an enriching experience.

> '' Conducting the research helped me realize that my students may have a different perspective to what I think is good for them.. ''

Not only were they impressed with the fact that I had put in so much effort to investigate and research my teaching methodology, but the findings proved that so much could be improved in the current teaching scenario followed in the school. My colleagues and school authorities were eager to know the details and I look forward to some of them taking up such research activities of their own. This research engagement helped me to be the teacher-leader that I have always strived to be.

Impact on my students

The research project had a positive impact on my students. Realizing their potential and value in the teaching process, increased their self-esteem. The fact that their opinions make a class better was something they had never felt before.

> '' This research engagement helped me to be the teacher-leader that I have always strived to be''

Now they are opening up and voicing their thoughts freely in the classroom. I am now getting a better grasp of what they like or dislike during the lesson and what motivates them to perform better.

Impact on my school

While the AR project was on, it generated a lot of interest among my colleagues. Students of other classes were also intrigued. This generated positive interest towards the project. Once the project was over and I discussed the findings with the school management and my colleagues, it became obvious that all the teachers were interested in exploring this option in their own classroom as a means to improve their classroom environment.

Challenges along the way

Yes, there were some—the primary among them being shortage of class-time to conduct the research. Hence, I reiterate what Nunan (2006) stated, "Lack of time was the single biggest impediment to carrying out action research" (p. 6). This I overcame by planning everything in advance and distributing the data collection over a period of time. I definitely had to take a few extra classes to complete the research. The challenge of convincing the school management, students and their parents was no less. However, defining the benefits this research work would generate helped me to get their support.

Where next?

I intend to continue in my journey of exploring my classroom—Researching, seems the way forward. To sustain the positive impacts of this research work, I plan to communicate my research experience to teachers from the community at large. I often organize and conduct workshops for teachers where I communicate what I have learnt or done recently as well as engage teachers in discussions regarding the best practices they are applying in their classrooms. Such workshops will be the best platform for other teachers to know, learn and do classroom-based exploratory research.

As part of the EVO 2018, teacher-researchers shared their classroom-based research through presentations of their action research projects.

My presentation can be accessed at:

http://iatefl.adobeconnect.com/p2746z6gv3t5 (Time- 48:00 onwards) together with a padlet (https://padlet.com/sengupta_sharmi/a2mgr9f58c90) highlighting my journey during the EVO research work. Personally, I feel, my journey as a teacher researcher has just started. I hope to walk far on this path!

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

1. Do you have any technological support in the English class?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Some

2. What does your teacher use technology in class for?

3. What do you feel about the use of technology in the classroom?

4. Does it help you to understand the text better?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

   If yes, how?

5.   Compared to seeing photographs/ realia in the classroom, using technology

is?

☐ More interesting

☐ Less interesting

☐ Same

6. Does it motivate/demotivate you? Why?

L1 as a Resource or Constraint: A Proposal for Collaborative Action Research

Dr. Anjali V Bagde
Head, Department of French and Francophone Studies, School of European Languages, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

Prof. Julu Sen
Head, Department of ELT, School of Distance Education, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

Our teaching context

The English and Foreign Languages University in Hyderabad, India offers an International Training Programme (ITP) for professionals from various countries to develop their proficiency in English. A group of executives from Mali came from January to March 2018 to develop their communication skills in English. The action research reported in this article emerged from this class.

Dr. Anjali V Bagde, Associate Professor and Head of Department of French and Francophone Studies, School of European Languages, EFL University has 28 years of teaching experience in teaching French as Foreign Language at the BA and MA levels. Her research interests lie in Teaching /Learning French as a Foreign Language, Developing Intercultural Competence and Teacher Training. She also guides research in these areas.

Prof Julu Sen, Professor and Head of the Department of English Language Teaching, School of Distance Education, EFL University has over 4 decades of experience in teaching English as a second language. Besides taking sessions in BA (hons), MA, BEd, PGCTE, M.Phil, she has guided students in Ph.D in English. She has also translated from Bengali to English. International Training programmes at the University have exposed her to foreign students who come to EFLU from different parts of the World. EVO 2018 was an enriching experience.

Our story of engaging in research

The class was conducted by Julu. Anjali was the research partner from the Department of French and Francophone Studies. While this class was going on, Julu saw the EVO advertisement on Facebook and was inspired to join the online course. In the process of doing this course, we learnt the steps of going through an exploratory action research: observing the class, identifying the problems, taking action to solve the problems and implications for further questions that may emerge.

We decided to do this collaborative action research when we noticed that the students from Mali wanted more exposure to communicative skills in English - listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The objective of this particular class was to draw their attention to key terms while listening to dialogues that are accessible online. However, they found the British accent in the dialogues difficult to understand. We then decided to start with simple songs (in an Indian accent, which they found easier) to help them identify and understand key words in the songs. The group was given some listening tasks in the class. The tasks were based on 2 volumes of the 'Karadi Rhymes CD. These songs, sung by Usha Uthup and written by Shobha Vishwanath (2009) are also available on YouTube and the links are mentioned in the references. The blurb of the CD states that the songs "celebrate the essence of Indian childhood, with songs about mangoes, Bhel Puri festivals and flowers". We focused on these rhymes because they illustrated Indian culture in an intercultural encounter. At the same time, we found that the students were able to comprehend the Indian accent more easily than the British accent.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for the questions that we dealt with during class hours. The students enjoyed the songs, and they were inspired to do mind-maps on the blackboard. They discussed various aspects of culture in Mali which was a learning experience for us. These activities were followed by written homework tasks which were later assessed. This paper focuses on the data that has emerged from these writing tasks. The following are some examples of the writing tasks that were given to them:

1. They listened to a song "Just Like You" (Karadi Rhymes) and for homework they had to introduce themselves in a paragraph.

2. They were introduced to the Indian flag through a song "I salute my flag" (Karadi Rhymes) and they had to draw and write about their flag.

3. They heard a song on festivals "Eid is here" (Karadi Rhymes) and they had to answer a question in writing: What do you do during your festivals.

4. They were asked to note down the process of making sambhar (an Indian dish) through a song "Sambhar" (Karadi Rhymes) and they were asked to write down the recipe of any of their local dishes.

5. They listened to a song on monkeys "Monkeys" (Karadi Rhymes) and they had to share their experiences with monkeys.

The purpose of our research and questions

As common in any writing class, the learners' texts produced had several errors. Normally, a teacher would be inclined to mark these errors in red and return the copies. However, as action researchers, the question that was bothering us was the source of these recurrent errors and how we could help learners to overcome them. While collaborating on this problem, we found that some of the errors were recurring. The students' scripts were initially assessed by Julu. Though Anjali could identify errors in grammar, vocabulary and spelling, Julu found it difficult to explain the source of the errors and hence to find solutions to remedy these errors. That was when Julu wondered if the errors were due to the influence of any other language that she could not understand. Since the students were French speakers, Julu decided to consult Anjali Bagde, Head of the Department of French and Francophone studies at our university. Consequently, Anjali agreed to collaborate and correct the scripts and did the translation. While assessing the texts written by the students, she discovered that many of the errors were indeed due to French influence. We then decided to analyse these errors systematically and use them while giving positive constructive feedback to the students The research questions emerged from this context:

1. How can the awareness of L1 in EFL writing be raised and how can this awareness be used a resource or an asset?
2. How can we do a collaborative action research project to address the issues in students' patterns in writing?

Our research plan and results

How we collected the data

The data was collected mainly from the written tasks and from personal interaction with the students while providing feedback. The ethical considerations were kept in mind and all the stakeholders gave their consent. We obtained an official document from our institution that enabled us to carry out a research. Additionally, we let or students know at the beginning of the course that we are doing research. In order to analyse the data, the errors were underlined and colour coded according to the language categories to which they belonged. (See Appendix 2 as an example)

Mentor(s) and Peer support

The results were discussed in a webinar with Prof. Richard Smith and Asli Saglam, and they encouraged us to report our findings in a full-length paper and this is a step in that direction.

Results

The following table shows how the categories were named i.e. The first column indicates the language category (morphological, syntactic or lexical errors). The second column indicates the examples from the scripts and the third column shows how the sentences could appear in French.

Table 1. Coding categories of grammar errors in student writings

Category	Example from scripts	French equivalent
1. Use of articles before nouns	I like the trade	J'aime le commerce
	My colour is the red	Ma couleur (préférée) est le rouge
	The red means the courage and the bravery	Le rouge représente le courage...
	I'm social administrator	Je suis administrateur social
2. Verbs phrases	Before <u>be</u> put on the fire	Avant d'être mis sur le feu…
	I can to become a salesman	Je peux devenir commerçant
	Put salt and let simmer....let boil.....	Mettez du sel et laissez mijoter ...laissez bouillir
3. Possessive construction	The monkey of the neighbour	Le singe du voisin
	Prayer of the morning	La prière du matin
4. Subject pronouns	One left to look at it (the monkey) not far from our school	On est allé le voir…
	The flag of the country is a strong symbol. He teaches us the value of a republic	Il (le drapeau) nous enseigne les valeurs d'une République
	The sauce is prepared with okra.... He is very good	Elle est très bonne (la sauce)
5. Place of adjectives	My brother is a trader ambulant	Mon frère est commerçant ambulant
	I have never had any experience particular	Je n'ai jamais eu une experience particuliere (avec les singes)
6. Place of adverbs	They live all in Paris	Ils vivent tous à Paris
	Peel a lot of onions cut into small pieces. Cut also a chicken into small pieces.	Découpez aussi un poulet…
7. Word order	Suddenly... pops up before me, the monkey	Soudain, devant moi, apparaît le singe
Coined words	The monkey on the tree degusted my fruits.	Le singe...a dégusté mes fruits Aliment
	In Mali, have a dish called couscous. The ailment in the base is mais (maize)	Mais
	For the preparation of .... we use dry poison	Poisson
	Receipt :Larro (for recipe)	Recette
8. Direct translation of French expressions	For the most part	Pour la plupart
	They live in my village at 400 kms from Bomako	Ils vivent dans mon village à 400 kilomètres de Bomako
	I have no children for the moment	Je n'ai pas d'enfant pour le moment
	In general way	De façon générale

Observations and Analysis

a) In French, a noun is generally preceded by a definite or indefinite article. This rule was applied to the English sentence, e.*g. The red means the courage and the bravery* instead of "Red means courage and bravery."

b) A student had written: "*I'm social administrator*" for "I'm a social administrator". In French the article is not used in such a sentence construction.

c) Based on the French structure "Avant de + Infinitif" a student wrote "*Before to go*" Instead of 'before going.'

d) The French rule of "Pouvoir + Infintif was used in the sentence *"I can to become a salesman"* instead of "I can become a salesman". Evidently the student was not aware of the difference between to-infinitives and bare infinitives.

e) Another student wrote *"let boil"* (laisser bouillir) instead of "let it boil", omitting 'it' between the verbs.

f) The French possessive construction with the preposition 'de' (Le singe du voisin) was transferred to English in the sentence "The *monkey of the neighbour*" instead of "the neighbour's monkey"

g) The subject pronoun 'on' in French seemed to be the source of several errors. For example, in the sentence '*One left to look at (the monkey)*", 'one' has replaced' 'we' as is the prevalent use in French. However, such a construction is not acceptable in English. The pronoun 'il' in French also led to several errors. In French, since 'il' can mean it or he, some students used he instead of it e.g. "He for the flag or the sauce *(The sauce is prepared with okra.... He is very good*).

h) The position of adjectives and adverbs also led to errors. We found that students were placing adjectives after the noun as is possible in French but never in English e.g. trader ambulant, article cheap, experience particular. Similar errors were noticed in adverbial phrases. *They live all in Paris*, 'all' was placed after the verb, an incorrect construction in English but acceptable in French. In the sentence *Cut also the chicken*, the correct English sentence should be: 'Also cut the chicken…".

i) We found some errors were caused due to the use of a word order acceptable in French but not acceptable in English. The word order' S+V+ Prepositional phrase cannot be changed in English but can be reversed in French. We found that the French word order was used in the English sentence: *Suddenly, pops up before me the monkey* instead of 'Suddenly a monkey pops up before me'.

In the lexical category, three sub categories of L1 based errors were noticed viz. borrowing from L1, coinage based on L1 and direct translation from L1(Hemschua and Schmitt, 2006). Words like *études, étudiant and traditionnel* were directly borrowed from French to mean studies, students and traditional'.

Other words like *receipt, poison and ailment* were coined from the French words 'recette, poisson and aliment' respectively. Some words and expressions e.g. *For the most part* (pour la plupart) or *in a general way (*de façon generale) were directly translated from French.

A) One of the outcomes of this study was that through feedback sessions and revising their work the students were made aware that they were applying the rules in French to their writing in English so that they can focus on particular areas of improvement. As teachers, we could also be more focussed in providing feedback to the students both individually as well as in plenary sessions where we could talk about common problems.

B) As teachers we often have to take decisions on the spot to solve problems that emerge in the classroom and we grope in the dark. If we collaborate with other colleagues to solve such problems, it would be a step towards our continuous professional development. This refers to the second research question that collaborate projects help to address classroom problems. We cannot overestimate the immense potential for an abiding partnership between a teacher of English and a teacher of French, and this action research project is a move towards that direction. We both have learnt from our experiences. By making the participants aware of their problems and drawing examples of French influences in their writing, we have made feedback as a teaching-learning tool in both teaching English.

> As teachers we often have to take decisions on the spot to solve problems that emerge in the classroom and we grope in the dark.
>
> If we collaborate with other colleagues to solve such problems, it would be a step towards our continuous Professional development.

In this research study we have followed the steps in teacher research including ASK-ACT-EVALUATE-LEARN-APPLY-ASK. We think that this can be applied to classroom based research into teaching French as well. Through this process we have reflected, collaborated, read and communicated (Borg, 2014, p.25). "By talking to colleagues about their inquiries, teachers can receive useful feedback and advise and also motivate others to engage in inquiries of their own" (Borg, 2014, p.26). This case study provides evidence that teacher research is enhanced when teachers work together on a shared project rather than alone. Our collaborative experience also shows that the L1 can be used as a resource rather than a constraint.

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L1 as a Resource or Constraint to learning a foreign language: A Proposal for Collaborative Action Research
Dr. Anjali V. Bagde ,The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad
Prof. Julu Sen, Department of ELT, School of Distance Education, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

Appendix 1

Teaching Through Songs

Just like you

1.   Name the places mentioned in this song, and locate them on a map of India.

2.   Describe the landscape of some of these places.

3.   What kinds of dances were the people performing?

4.   Compose a poem, introducing yourself.

5.   What could be some of other questions based on this song?

Mangoes

1.   Name the different varieties of mangoes?

2.   List the adjectives, the words used to describe the mangoes

       What could be some of the other questions based on this song?

To the Beach I like to go

1.   Have you ever been to the Beach? Which Beach?

2.   What did you do?

3.   What has this child done which you never do?

Ka ka Shriek the crows

1.   Which ritual strikes you as an unusual symbol of this culture?

2.   Read the story Khuswant Singh's **Portrait of a Lady** and compare these crows to the sparrows in the story.

3. Describe these crows' routine

    Any other questions

Eid is here

1. What do you do during your festivals?
2. What is common in the celebrations of EID, Diwali of Christmas?

What could be the other questions?

There's a Cricket Match in Town Today

1. Do you like Team-Sports, like Cricket or Football? Why?
2. Why are people excited about this match?
3. How is the excitement captured?

Any other questions?

I salute my Flag

1. Can you draw the flag of your country and describe it?
2. What is the meaning of the Indian Flag?

Appendix 2

ruyʾo jʿ

TRAVEL BY TRAIN ②

I once traveled by train between Kayes and Bamako, a journey that I will never forget ever so interesting and through this trip I saw landscape. Each stop small traders ambulant came introduce ourselves their articles cheap. Chose items for the most party consisted of mango, lemone, egg.

The trip by train made me discover a lot of thing.

② The flag of my country has three colors. the meaning of the various colors of the Flag of Mali what are the green, yellow and red.

The green means the nature, the yellow means gold, wealth. The red mean the courage, the bravery.

,

— use of articles before nouns
— place of adjectives
— Direct translation of French expressions

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Exploratory Action Research: The journey of discovery

Betty D Primus,
Papar District Education Office, Sabah
Ministry of Education, Malaysia

My teaching context

For this project, I conducted a collaborative action research with an English teacher and 38 of her students aged 16, at a Secondary school in Papar. The school has the most numbers of students in the district. The target students were doing poorly in their mid-term examination. From the discussion with the teacher, her students were not doing well in all sections of the English Papers. 32 of them submitted blank answer sheets for Writing section while another six attempted to write a few sentences or copy the questions given. She also struggled to get her students to read and answer comprehension questions. They did poorly as they just lifted any sentence mindlessly to answer all the questions or they did not write any answer at all.

We found out from our informal discussion and a simple survey conducted with the students that all of them felt the text provided was difficult; 32 students could not comprehend most of the passage while another six could understand some parts but were unsure of the meanings. All students responded having problems with comprehending the passage due to many unfamiliar words. Therefore, reading became a difficult task for them as they had to spend more time guessing the meaning of words before they could get the ideas for each paragraph. These students almost never used English outside of the classroom or English lessons. From the response cards, we learned that almost all of them did reading only with the text given during English lessons. There were four girls

I was an English teacher for 12 years before I was appointed as the School Improvement Specialist Coach Plus (SISC+) attached to the District Education Office of Papar Sabah, Malaysia. I believe, in other countries, it is known as an Instructional Coach for teachers. My job is to provide support and guide teachers in terms of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. I specifically work with English teachers in my district. I mostly work with teachers who are teaching English for students aged 12 – 17. I am very passionate in doing research as I find myself growing in knowledge and skills when I help my teachers develop better. I also love to get teachers to embark on the journey of discovery with me, so they will experience meaningful learning while working with me and their own students.

who occasionally read magazines with English articles and two boys who read some comics in English, but most of them did not read other materials besides the English comprehension texts required for classroom learning.

My story of engaging in research

I have been doing research on my own, however, I found that I still need to learn more about doing it systematically. For me, there is always something new to learn and discover. I also love to inspire the teachers that I work with to do their own research for their students' improvement. However, guiding them was one of the biggest challenges for me. Many teachers that I worked with refused to do research as they find it time consuming and they see it as something extra and burdensome, on top of their mountainous daily tasks to complete. I think it is also my lack of knowledge and skills to develop their potentials as researchers. I need to learn more on getting teachers to reflect on their practices, identify and understand issues, analyse data and plan for improvement. I also need to get teachers to build relevant questions to help them explore the learning issues they have identified. The most crucial aspect is for me to verbalise or make it clear to the teachers on the steps they need to do to complete a cycle of action research.

When I saw the invitation to join EVO on one of the Facebook pages that I am a member of, I seized the opportunity. I saw it as a chance for me to develop myself further and in time, be more knowledgeable and skilful to guide other teachers in doing it. I am glad I joined it, as the well-structured project guided me throughout the process systematically, and because it was so informal, I did not find it seemed as overwhelming as normal research tends to be.

I found that the questions and feedback by the online mentors helped me to choose my research focus and narrow it down to the challenge or problem that I find most pressing at that moment. Since we faced problems with students who struggled to do reading comprehension, both the mentors and I agreed to focus on helping the teachers in this area.

My purpose of research and questions or puzzles

My concern was to help the teacher deals with remedial students; make them read and understand a narrative passage, so they can answer the comprehension questions and a summary task based on it. Through classroom observations and interviews, we found that the students lacked vocabulary to comprehend the passage which led to their inability to identify main points and details from the text. In the end, they gave up reading it entirely and just lifted directly from the passage to answer the comprehension and summary questions.
 With some guide from the EVO online mentor, I was able to come up with these exploratory research questions:
1.	How many of my students can read and understand a narrative text?
2.	How do the students feel about reading?
3.	What are the barriers of reading that my students have?
4.	What kind of texts/ narrative genres the students enjoy reading?
5.	How often do they read?
6.	What kind of reading activities they like and dislike?

These questions helped me guide the teacher to explore the problems from the point of views of the students, instead of making our own assumptions on their problems. I think it was a good start before we begin with the action plan.
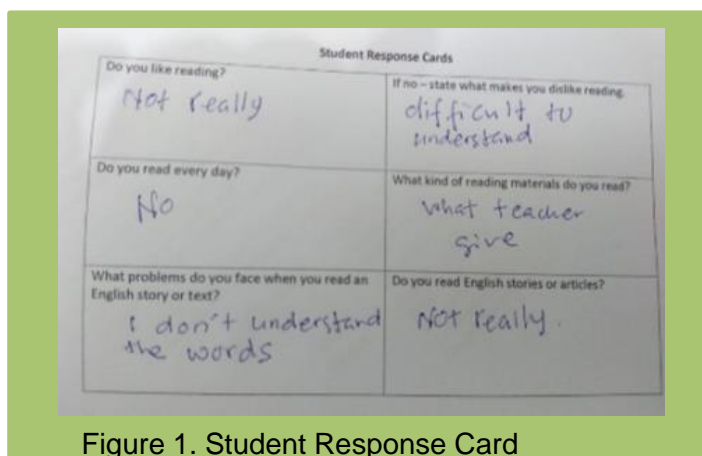
My research plan and results

To collect data, I have decided to prepare a survey for the students to get the answers for all the questions above. In addition, I conducted informal conversations to know more about their feelings, choice of reading materials and the kind of activities they like to do while reading. I also observed them during class to gain more insights on the barriers they need to overcome. I examined their reactions while doing some of the while reading activities to know more about their preferences. I considered asking students to give written feedback after each lesson.

In carrying out the research I have asked the consent from the school, as well as the teacher to collaborate with me. I have also briefed the students on this project.
I collected qualitative data and analysed the themes together with the teacher by identifying keywords from the student response cards and interviews. Data triangulation was much easier with the procedures introduced in EVO as shared by Richard Smith in Week 3 through one of the webinars. It is a very useful gain for me and I managed to do it together with the teacher involved in this research. I was glad to be able to share this simple data triangulation with other teachers too as many find analysing data as the biggest challenge when doing a research.

The data that we collected include responses of a survey, informal interviews or chats and review of completed work by the students which we also combined with lesson observations data.

i. Survey
There were two ways to collect data through a survey that I did for this research. First, I distributed a Student Response Card. Below is a sample response card seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Student Response Card

Secondly, I ensured the students wrote feedback of the lesson each time. To analyse the data, we looked for the keywords and classified them into categories.

Table 1. Summary of procedure and findings

What did I do?	What did I find out?
Simple Questionnaire using 'Student Response Card' - Do you like reading? - If no, state what makes you dislike reading. - Do you read every day? - What kind of reading materials do you read? - What problems do you face when you read an English story or text? - Do you read English stories or articles?	➢ 35 students said they did not like reading or did not read English text at all. ➢ 3 students mentioned reading some comics and magazines in English but did it occasionally and only on sections they like. ➢ All students mentioned difficulties in understanding each word in the text.
Students' Feedback - How do you feel about the activities today? - Do they like the lesson today?	➢ 32/38 students said they felt 'happy' and enjoyed the activities. ➢ 3 students just wrote 'OK'. ➢ 3 students drew a smiley.

ii. Interviews

I interviewed five students on the challenges of reading an English text. All five responded the text was difficult to read as there were too many unfamiliar words. They also mentioned having difficulties to guess the meaning as the topic was not something they were familiar with. After the Action Plan was implemented, the students mentioned that they were motivated to attempt the reading comprehension questions. The reasons given were the element of fun and reward promised to them. They also learnt to look for keywords using the technique taught to them.

iii. Students' work review

I also helped the teacher to review the students' answers for comprehension questions. Our findings showed 20 students managed to answer all questions with a few wrongs. Another 10 students answered eight out of 10 but not all are correct. Eight more students were able to answer more than five questions.

iv. Observation data

I did a few lesson observations to gauge the reaction of the students to the activities carried out in the classrooms. I found that 30 students were able to play active roles in discussing and identifying keywords and answers the comprehension questions. Another eight students need prompts and extra guidance to stay on task.

Mentor(s) and peer's support

The most difficult task for me was to stay on task to complete the research in time. I appreciate the continuous support I received from the mentors of this EVO project; guiding, giving constructive feedback and suggestions to improve on my research questions, data collection methods and analysis. Other participants in the google plus community also helped to provide suggestions and encouragement which really inspired me to move forward and helped me to stay focus.

Furthermore, the feedback and comments by the mentors and peers helped me explore my concerns and possible solutions in other ways. The google plus discussions were done informally which did not intimidate and helped encourage me to actively contribute in the community. The fact that all EVO participants were sharing personal stories of success and concerns made the connection more meaningful as it encouraged everyone to move beyond listening towards actively asking questions and participating in critical thinking. Besides learning from the mentors, I also gained valuable experiences and strategies from other participants.

Results

From a survey I conducted, 38 students responded they did not enjoy reading especially English texts. Therefore, in the beginning of this research they did not complete the reading comprehension task given to them. To overcome the issue, I have conducted several strategies as listed here:

Figure 2. Activities to boost reading motivation in English

The activities were done with the hope of building motivation for the students to read and complete the task given. Malone (1981) and Stipek (1993) claimed that when motivated, students tend to spend more time and effort in learning, persist in completing the challenging tasks, and take pleasure in their achievement. After about three weeks of collaborating with the teacher on all the activities, we found that students were able to complete reading tasks given.

REFLECTION

I was not able to complete the research within five weeks of the EVO project as the school and teacher were busy with other programmes when I was supposed to start collecting the data. Instead, I had presented in March 2018, almost a month later than the first session. This was made possible with the flexible arrangement to showcase the outcomes by EVO. Getting the teacher to collaborate in planning and doing the activities were quite challenging as well. I need to get the teacher onboard, to understand the procedures so I could run the project with her.

I had a problem in formulating the research questions, so they were exploratory. With the help of the online mentor assigned to me, I was able to come up with questions that helped me explore my concerns further. I was also making the mistake of making assumptions on the reasons for the problems that I was pondering, but with Classroom-based research EVO, I learned to explore the reasons from the students' perspectives. This helped me to be more insightful and to plan my actions focusing on the students' needs rather than just my own assumptions.

''I was also trying to make assumptions on the reasons for the problems that I was pondering. With EVO, I learned to explore the reasons from the students' perspectives. This helped me to be more insightful and to plan my actions focusing on the students' needs rather than just my own assumptions''

For the teacher, she described how she learnt from her students' feedback before making her own assumptions on the reasons for their poor results. She now understood that students' feedback provides valuable insights that can help her to improve her practice. In terms of analysing data, she now knows the aspects to look for and ways to analyse them before planning for her next step. In her words, "before this I felt like I was walking in a maze, now I know my focus and have better direction in planning for my students' improvement."

In terms of my own reflection on the research about reading that I have conducted, I learned that students love reading in groups. This makes the task less daunting as they were able to discuss difficult words and focus on keywords to get the meaning of the whole text. They also love competitions. Making them earn stickers of achievement through a systematic Reward System helped them to stay motivated throughout the reading lessons. They get a sense of accomplishment, and the sense of urgency that come with the Reward System implementation. This may relate to the Game-based learning, which was said to have potential in motivating students to be involved in fun learning (Liu, 2014).

"I also learned that a research can be a simple step by step process. The weekly assignments and sharing helped me to see that the process could be done by making small progress, so the research is more feasible and not time consuming or burdensome"

In addition, reading tasks become manageable when they read in smaller chunks or portions, as these are more digestible, and shorter segments will help students retain the information when the class discusses the materials. It can also help students build confidence in understanding a complex subject (https://www.waterford.org/tips-to-help-students-build-better-reading-skills/)

The most valuable discovery for me is that, as a teacher, we need to tap into their motivation to learn, or in this case, to read, before any related work can be done. Research has shown that motivation plays an important role in influencing learning (Ames, 1990) and is often considered to be a necessary antecedent for learning (Gottfried, 1985; Lepper, Iyengar, & Corpus, 2005). No matter how difficult the reading tasks are, if the students are motivated and keen to learn, they will able to complete them, despite not understanding the whole text. To build on their motivation, I must first establish trust and good rapport with the students. I also need to explore various reading strategies to meet their learning needs.

In this research project, I was not aiming to compare their results for different reading texts. My sole focus is to get students to read and complete tasks given, and I have observed change in the students in this research.

I also learned that a research can be a simple step-by-step process. The weekly assignments and sharing helped me to see that the process could be done by making small amounts of progress at a time, so the research is more feasible and not time consuming or burdensome. This will help me guide other teachers who are afraid of doing research to manage the process in small steps. But the most crucial aspect of the whole process was, for me, the continuous support and feedback from the mentors and peers. I found that the feedback helped in leveraging my ability to assess my own cognitive process, to think more carefully about the questions to ask, strategies to employ (Saaris, 2016), which really helps me to learn deeply and meaningfully.

Furthermore, it was done in an informal way, making the process less intimidating and challenging. I know that many of the teachers I worked with are afraid of everything 'formal', and so I found that this approach is very teacher-friendly and helpful. The sense of community, the trust and rapport helped the process to be a meaningful one.

This research benefited the students and the teacher collaborator for this research. Indirectly, the school is affected too, as the results contributed to improving performance in the English papers in all examinations involving the students. The result will be shared with the English panel members of the school, as well as teachers from other schools in the district, so they will be encouraged to adopt and adapt activities and boost their students' performance in reading too. The sharing will help other teachers who are struggling with the same issue.

This will not be my last research project; I am hopeful to join EVO again with a new focus. I love the community, the sharing and new insights. There are many more areas to explore. I would also like to create my own community with the teachers in my district, to help them explore issues related to their students and teaching practices. I hope that teachers will become more reflective and always eager to find ways to improve their practice. Before EVO experience, I was not very confident in getting teachers to do research, but now I feel more motivated to guide them to embark on the journey of discovery and hope that their experience will be as rewarding as the one I had this year.

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Exploratory Action Research in teaching practicum as a source of motivation

Mercedes A. Foligna

Instituto Superior Palomar de Caseros, Buenos Aires

Why I engaged in research

I am an English teacher and a teacher trainer in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Among other jobs, I am a teaching practice (Practicum) tutor at a four-year undergraduate teacher training program. Exploratory Action Research (EAR) came to me by sheer chance: in May 2017, the British Council organized a teacher development seminar in Buenos Aires, and I was lucky enough to be invited and be part of that experience. Together with a group of experienced colleagues from all corners of Buenos Aires, we had the chance to meet Richard Smith, who introduced us to the basics of EAR and helped us design the draft for our own project. I immediately realized this could be what I had been looking for: a way to raise my trainees' motivation to do the Practicum as well as to foster their willingness to pursue Continuous Professional Development after they graduated. Although at that moment I was able to draw only a preliminary draft for my project, I could not get to finish the project or even less to implement it.

Mercedes Foligna is an English teacher at Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and a teacher trainer for the Government of the city of Buenos Aires. At Instituto Superior Palomar de Caseros she tutors and supervises student teachers who practice in state secondary schools. Some of her main interests are the role of the affective filter in foreign language acquisition and English learning at university level.
She has given presentations in teachers´ conferences in Argentina and abroad.

During my summer holidays in January 2018 I learned about the *Classroom Based Research for Professional Development* in the *Electronic Village Online (EVO)*.

The site lay emphasis on the fact that EAR is "research by teachers for teachers (for their own professional development), and for the benefit of their students - not on more academic forms of research". This was an excellent chance to finish what I had started in May. In effect, at the EVO seminar I was able to finish designing the project, which I have been able to put into practice over the school year in 2018.

The Teaching Context

During the fourth year of studies at teacher training colleges in Argentina, trainees have to practice in secondary school courses.

Photo 1. Trainees who participated in the study (Source: Author)

Although this is a pre-service course, in reality most of the trainees that arrive at this stage of their programme of studies have already been working as English teachers in private schools at different levels for several years. However, public schools (government-run schools), which is where they have to practice, are a totally new context, which they tend to find daunting and unattractive. As a trainer who has mentored practicum teachers for many years, I have had two major concerns about my trainees:

(1) although they comply with the course requirements, they do so only to finish their programme of studies with relatively less responsibility and commitment rather than to learn to teach.

(2) Once teachers obtain their degree, they do not engage in professional development as active participants any more. To address these personal concerns, I provided my trainees with the possibility of sharing their knowledge with other colleagues at a local teacher development event hoping that they could notice the possibilities for professional development that they might have after they graduate, and develop a sense of becoming a productive teacher rather than consuming knowledge provided for them.

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The Problem and its background

The curricular design for teacher training colleges in Buenos Aires establishes that that it is mandatory for trainees to practice in two different courses at secondary schools. For administrative reasons, at Instituto Superior Palomar de Caseros, this teaching practice period, that is to say, the Practicum, takes place in public schools. There are two key issues that I need to highlight in this context:

Student-related challenges

1. Most students have limited knowledge of English and still tend to resist learning the language.
2. Most are convinced that English is too difficult, and is not worth paying attention to.
3. Classes tend to be overcrowded and the only resources available are the board and some chalk.

Trainee-related challenges

1. The trainees that do the Practicum have generally worked as English teachers for more than three years in private institutions, as the shortage of qualified teachers makes most schools hire practitioners without formal qualifications.
2. When they begin the Practicum they feel unmotivated, as they consider that they have already had extensive practice while working. Public schools are, however, a new context for most of my trainees. They are not used to dealing with the problems that arise in these classrooms, which makes the experience even more challenging.
3. Once trainees have graduated as English teachers, few of them pursue further professional development since they do not have enough time or resources.

These contextual and personal constraints, as I observe, make the practicum process even harder for the trainers, which I can attest to.

The reasons that I have detailed above led me to consider the possibility that:

a) The trainees might find conducting an EAR project a very relevant initiative for their professional development. They would design and conduct their own EAR project, which would raise their motivation to do the Practicum

b) They could take a closer look into their classroom and their own practices which would empower them to do further research.

c) They could also write a reflective report on it and make a poster presentation to share their findings at a teacher development event.

EAR is especially useful for my purposes as it is a kind of practitioner research that has been conceived "to address and cope with difficult circumstances". An important advantage is that it "enables teachers to gain a better understanding of their classroom contexts, hence develop more appropriate ways of teaching, without waiting for solutions from outside" (Rebolledo & Smith, 2018, p.21). EAR does not necessarily require extra resources, extensive preparation or time-consuming actions, as the scale given to one's own project is what will determine its requirements. That is to say, EAR strips research from its traditional academic formality while providing a framework within which any practitioner with some guidance can address their concerns about one's own practice.

All these things considered, the assumption that encouraged me to start my EAR project was that my trainees could increase motivation and interest by developing their own EAR projects, and that taking an active role in a Teacher Development event would open a window into their future Continuous Professional Development. Although the Practicum would not be their first teaching experience, EAR could be a new form to approach their pedagogical challenges in the classroom. In addition to convey their research to other students and colleagues, would give them a glimpse into how sharing with the teaching community enriches one's own practice.

My purpose of research

The main aim of my research was to find out whether supporting trainees' EAR project would improve their motivation and incentivize them to take an active role in a local teacher development event.

My research questions

1. Do teaching practice trainees feel motivated to do the Practicum?
2. Is the inclusion of Exploratory Action Research in the Practicum a source of motivation for them?
3. Will presenting in a 'Teachers´ Conference' inspire them to continue doing research and share with their colleagues?

Method and Procedure

Participants

The teacher training course my students are finishing is a four-year programme, but in practice, few individuals have ever finished in four years, as it is time consuming, and also because students start working before they graduate, which makes studying and working for their degree extremely difficult. The six trainees this study focuses on, aged between 25 to 40 years, are no exception, as all of them have been studying for at least five years. Five of them work in private or bilingual schools, while the other one is working in a public school.

Timeline and organization

Table 1 shows both timelines and the stages of my project and that of my trainees.

Table 1. Stages in the research project

		My EAR		Trainees' EAR
	STAGE		STAGE	
January February	1	Design of the project at the EVO.		
	2	Detecting the research questions		
April May	3	Initial training	1	Initial training in EAR
	4	Initial collection of data	2	Trainees start observing in the courses they will teach
			3	They detect their research questions
			4	They design an EAR project
June-September	5	I provided guidance and help in their project	5	Trainees implement their EAR project in the classrooms where they have to practice
October	6	I provided guidance to write the report	6	Trainees wrote the report
November	7	Final Data collection: trainees' report	7	Trainees hand in the report
	8	I organize the 2nd Teacher Development Day, where the trainees will present their posters	8	Poster presentations at the 2nd. Teacher Development Day at Instituto Superior Palomar de Caseros
	9	I analyze the data, draw conclusions and write a report		

My Exploratory Action Research

Stages 1 and 2: Design of the EAR project and research question

In January 2018 I designed my EAR and developed the research questions helped by my tutors and fellow participants at the Classroom Based Research EVO 2018. This was an enriching experience that helped me contextualize my study. Figure 1 displays the actual asynchronous interaction with one of the mentors.
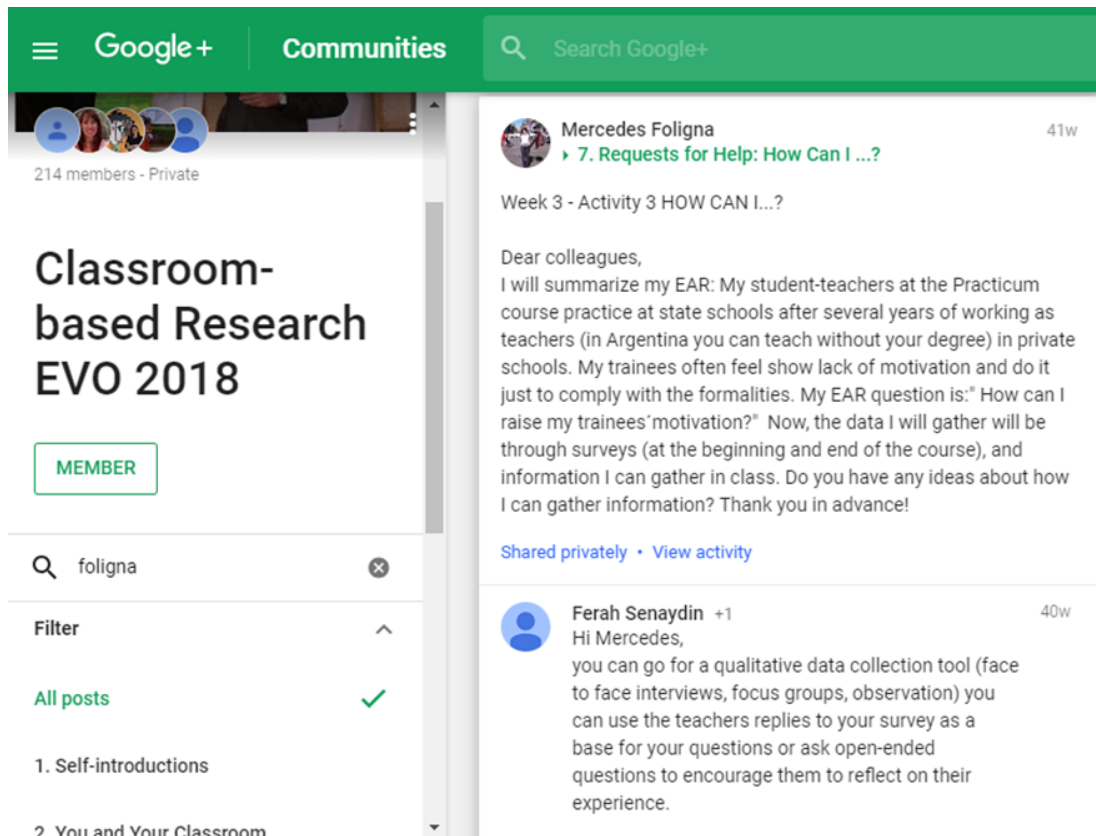
Figure 1. A screenshot of communication on Google Plus Community of Classroom-based Research EVO

Stage 3: Initial training
In order to introduce the trainees to EAR, I provided them with some material and exercises that I adapted from *A Handbook for Exploratory Action Research*. I shared this on the Google+ community and discussed them in class. This included a general introduction to EAR, an overview of the Chilean Champion Teachers project, some reflection questions on the material presented and classroom discussions about the testimonies provided in the handbook. Apart from this discussion, trainees also talked about the issues that cause the most problems in their own classrooms.

Stage 4: Initial collection of data
A survey was administered in order to know how the trainees' background could affect their willingness to do the Practicum, and what they thought about further development after they graduated.

Stage 5: Guidance for the trainees´ research
Whenever this was demanded, I helped the trainees in their actions while they were implementing their projects; for example, in designing the collection of data, or to decide which actions could be taken in order to address their concern.

Stage 6: Guidance for the trainees' report writing
As the trainees are not used to writing academic reports, it was necessary to guide and help them in their writing process. That is why they were given a framework to follow and they also had my help if they ran into difficulties. (Appendix 1)

Stage 7: Final data collection
After the trainees handed in their reports, I analyzed the results. This analysis can be seen in the *Results* section.

Trainees´ EAR
In the same way my research was organized in stages, so was the trainees' project, and I used the Classroom based research for Professional Development EVO as a model. The stages, which were presented in table 1, are as follows:

Stage 1: Initial training in EAR
In order to introduce the trainees to EAR, I provided them with some material and exercises that I adapted from, A Handbook for Exploratory Action Research. I shared this in the Google plus community and discussed them in class. This included a general introduction to EAR, an overview of the Chilean Champion Teachers project, some reflection questions on the material presented and some work on the cases given as examples in the handbook. All this was discussed in class, and they also brainstormed which topics offer most problems in their own classrooms.

Stage 2: Classroom observation
Each trainee was assigned a course to practice in. The Practicum involves observing three classes in the course where they will be practicing. During the observation period, trainees were instructed to detect key problematic issues that they thought were worth exploring.

Stages 3 and 4: Research question and project design
After having observed classes in their courses and before they started planning, the trainees had a meeting with me to design their research questions. They were guided by me to design the actions they would have to implement to explore the issues they decided to look into.

Stage 5: Implementing the project
The trainees delivered their classes and put into practice the planned action. When this period finished, they were asked to write a report on their work, where they had to write the experience and their findings.

Stage 6: Writing the report
At this stage, they had to write a report where they evaluated results of the EAR project and their own experience as part of this process. As mentioned before, they followed a framework (Appendix 1) that helped them organize their work and include all the necessary information.

Stage 7: Socializing the findings

At the end of the school year, they prepared a poster presentation based on their report, summarizing their experience.

Photo 2. Poster presentations of the participants

This was presented at a teachers' conference organized at the teacher training college where they study.

Photo 3. A participant presenting her poster

The first research question is whether Teaching Practice trainees felt motivated to do the Practicum. Consequently, they were asked their age and how long they have been working as English teachers, as these are the factors I identified as making then disengaged in the Practicum. In effect, the average age of the trainees is 30, which means that they are not in the initial stages of their working lives, and most of them have been working as English teachers for 1 to 5 years, and some of them for an even longer period of time. However, contrary to what I thought, their main experience is in the primary level, which means that most of them do not have wide experience at the level in which they have to practice. Moreover, all of them declared that they thought that the Practicum, or Teaching Practice was going to be useful for their performance as a teacher. I have to say that I did not expect this result, more often they say that they already required knowledge covered in the practicum and that there is little for them to learn.

The second question is whether the inclusion of Exploratory Action Research in the Practicum is a source of motivation. Both the survey and the reports showed that engagement in EAR offered motivational support. This was really encouraging, because this means that EAR could be an appropriate tool to motivate them even further. In the reports, one of the trainees wrote: *"I learned from this action research experience that it is necessary to explore classroom issues. This process of formulating questions and finding answers can be used to explore any issue in the classroom, and consequently lead to better ways of teaching and learning".*

In the question related to continuous development, most of them agreed on the fact that after they graduate, they will do seminars, and others will opt for a university degree or MOOCs. None of them, however, is planning to write in journals or present at conferences. I think this has to do with the fact that many trainees and teachers think that this is a field that is reserved for those who have academic knowledge of the field.

The final stage of the project was for the trainees to give a poster presentation. They were part of the 2nd Teacher Development Day at Instituto Superior Palomar de Caseros. It was an enriching experience both for them and for myself as a trainer. The trainees were able to convey their research to other colleagues, who showed great interest in each of the cases. The trainees manifested that they were satisfied with the results and with the possibility of presenting their research at a conference.

Mentor(s) and peer support

As the Classroom based research for professional development EVO took place during January and February, when we have summer holidays in my country, I could not implement the project synchronously. However, the mentors and peers on Google+ provided great help for me to prepare the project I could put into practice when the classes start.

I used the materials provided at the EVO sessions to introduce the trainees to EAR. It was also great help for me to see how the Google+ community was organized, and debates were triggered in an orderly manner. Besides this, the tutors provided a good model that I could follow when offering different forms of support to my trainees.

As to the interaction with my tutors and peers, it was enriching to receive feedback and to provide it. For example, when I presented the project on Google Plus, some peers gave me the courage I needed by telling me that they thought it was a great idea. I can also remember that Andrea Lypka, another participant, (also an author in this e-book) suggested that the Action Research project as part of the Practicum could be another burden for the trainees, rather than a learning experience. This made me think of increasing motivation by encouraging my trainees present at a local conference, as this would be a different and memorable experience. Ferah Şenaydın, one of the mentors in EVO, helped me see that I needed qualitative data in order to better understand motivation, which is why I included the trainees' reports as another source of information. It was also encouraging to be invited by Aslı Saglam to present at the final webinar, as it was a great moment of sharing and learning together.

> REFLECTION
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> My favourite quote is Gerome Bruner's "Anyone can learn anything somehow". Applied to EAR, we could say that anyone can do research, somehow. EAR has the initial purpose of making research available for classroom teachers, a way to look for solutions, to find new paths and to create better actions. In my case, I can say that implementing this project has given me the courage to do research at a scale that is attainable and possible even for overworked practitioners.
>
> There have been some challenging issues in this process, the greatest one being the danger of overloading my trainees with a task that goes beyond the syllabus requirement, which meant that they had extra work apart from planning and preparing materials for their classes.

However, I have to say that they never complained or showed resistance to any of it. Also, at times I found that I lacked knowledge to help my students to identify the research questions, but I trust that this will change as I acquire more experience in classroom research.

This experience has been and continues to be really inspiring and nurturing. What is interesting is that I tested a tool and at the same time I was teaching my students to use it for their own development. To observe, to explore, to try out and to evaluate makes any teacher embarking on such a project more reflective and obliges us to have a professional approach to our job.

''To observe, to explore, to try out and to evaluate makes any teacher embarking on such a project more reflective and obliges us to have a professional approach to our job''

My plans for the future are to include EAR in the annual syllabus. I will also start a website that I will use as a repository for EAR materials and where my trinees will be able to publish their findings.

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Exploratory Action Research in teaching practicum as a source of motivation

Mercedes A. Foligna, Instituto Superior Palomar de Caseros, Buenos Aires

Framework for writing the Exploratory Action Research report

1. Title
2. Introduction
    a. Context
        i. School
        ii. Course
        iii. Number of students
        iv. Students´ level of English. How do you know?
        v. English/Spanish in the classroom
    b. Present the problem you are going to explore. What is the question you wanted to answer?
    c. What authors can give you some information about this problem? Quote one or more sources that refer to this problem, and link them to your own research.
    d. Announce what parts your paper will have.

3. **Method**
  Plan of action: What did you do to explore the issue that you wanted to explore? What actions did you put into practice? When did you do it? What resources did you use?

4. **Results**: What do you highlight from this experience? What hindrances did you find? What changes were you able to produce? Did the interventions you made live up to your expectations? What did you find out?

5. **Conclusions**:
  What conclusions can you draw from this experience?
  How can you change in another intervention?
  What conclusions can you draw for this course and for the educational system in general?

Stories by Teacher Researchers in an Online Research Community

This book reports on research that have been conducted by the members of the Classroom-based Research For Professional Development Programme that is launched online within the scope of TESOL's Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Interest Section's project Electronic Village Online (EVO). The chapters reflect teachers' and research mentors' perspectives regarding their classrooms, and their learners. These accounts describe the methods used to explore their inquiries and present the outcomes. The authors also reflect on the research process and their engagement in the online training programme. Representing teachers' voices across diverse settings, the book has universal appeal and hopes to be a source of inspiration for more teacher-research.

About the editors

Aslı Lidice Gokturk Saglam (School of Languages, Ozyegin University) has been interested in establishing face-to-face and online teacher research communities since 2016. To this end, together with Kenan Dikilitas, she developed Classroom-based Research for Professional Development Programme within the scope of TESOL Electronic Village Online (EVO) to create opportunities for teachers to engage in research.

Kenan Dikilitaş, who works at Bahçeşehir University Istanbul, is an ELT teacher educator and researcher, particularly interested in teacher research for professional development. He has organized international conferences for the IATEFL Research SIG and conducted teacher research projects in Turkey; he has published several edited books.

Aslı Lidice Göktürk Sağlam
and Kenan Dikilitaş