



Research and Teacher Education in English Language Teaching: Section Introduction **53**

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Abstract

Chapters in this section explore how research can contribute to English language teachers' professional development. They present different traditions of research, including action research and heuristic research approaches, as paths for language teachers' professional development. They also illustrate how research conducted according to different approaches such as classroom research, conversation analysis, (auto)ethnographic research, and critical research can help English language teachers enhance their professional practice. Other chapters in the section concern different aspects of language teachers' professional lives and development, including teachers' emotional labor, teacher cognition, classroom instruction, technology-enhanced professional development, and collective efficacy.

Keywords

Action research · Heuristic research · Critical research · Professional development

Chapters in the first edition of this handbook addressed the relationship between research and policy/practice in English language teaching as policy makers and practitioners can be considered as consumers of academic research. Contributors in this edition note that English language teachers need to undertake continuous professional development efforts in response to increasingly complex pedagogical tasks and shifting contextual conditions. To facilitate such professional development, teachers

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develop a wide range of professional knowledge, including “knowledge for practice,” “knowledge in practice,” and “knowledge of practice” (Cochran-Smyth and Lytle 1999, p. 273). Language teachers need what academic researchers try to generate through research and what language teacher educators attempt to pass on through teacher education programs for practice, such as how language learners learn languages and what teaching methods may work better with a particular group of students. In addition, language teachers need to develop their own pedagogical understandings in teaching and through reflecting on their pedagogical experiences. Such knowledge in practice, or teachers’ practical knowledge, may be different from what emerges from academic research, which often contributes to gaps between research and practice.

Language teachers may also generate important knowledge about practice by undertaking efforts to inquire into their own practices. As language teachers can longer be treated as “unthinking practitioners,” it has become necessary to appreciate that language teachers are critical consumers of research findings and “autonomous investigators of their own work” (Borg 2010, pp. 395–396). The need to bridge the gap between research and practice requires readers to reconsider how three types of teacher knowledge can be integrated into education programs and professional development schemes to support language teachers’ pursuit of effective pedagogical practice.

Chapters in this section address the abovementioned concerns about English language teachers’ knowledge. The first six chapters focus on traditions of research in relation language teachers’ professional development. In particular, the chapters by Burns and by Freeman and Cameratti present important paths for language teachers to make sense of teaching and enhance their professional practice. The other four chapters (by Zappa-Hollman and Duff, Waring, Stanley, and Chun and Morgan) discuss how classroom research, conversation analysis, (auto)ethnographic research, and critical research can be appropriated by language teachers for professional development.

The rest of the section concerns several critical aspects of language teachers’ professional lives and learning. Benesch’s chapter highlights language teachers’ emotional labor, while Lowen and Sato’s chapter reminds readers of the significance of instructed second language acquisition research for language teachers’ teaching. Borg’s chapter outlines the findings that research has generated about language teachers’ cognition. Benitt, Schmidtt, and Legtuke’s chapter elaborates how language teachers learn to improve teaching as mediated by technology-enhanced programs. The last chapter by Pei, Loughland, Jin, and Nguyen discusses the impact of language teacher education programs on their graduates’ collective efficacy in China.

Burns’ chapter highlights action research, an increasingly popular form of teacher research that enables teachers to become agentive actors in pursuit of professional development. The chapter elaborates its connection with other forms of research and considers different initiatives that have promoted action research as an important path to English language teachers’ professional development. In many senses Freeman and Cameratti’s chapter on heuristic research is a complement to Burn’s focus on action research, as it opens up a variety of means and paths for English

language teachers to pursue professional development. The chapter reviews a family of educational research approaches that involve researching learning and teaching through intervention, including action research. It outlines the common principles that guide this group of heuristic research techniques, including “action research, design-based research, design-based implementation research, developmental work research, lesson study, networked improvement communities, participatory action research and social design experiments.” All these forms of heuristic research attempt to address and solve particular problems or challenges that English language teachers encounter in particular contexts. Instead of generating decontextualized knowledge, these heuristic approaches allow various stakeholders to participate in the research process to describe, explain, and understand what happens in the process. Therefore, they help English language teachers to develop practical and expert knowledge of practice through their participatory inquiry efforts.

Zappa-Hollman and Duff’s chapter presents recent qualitative research that examines language learning and use in contexts where English is used as medium of instruction (“EMI”). In response to the rising number of students who speak English as an additional language, English language teachers need relevant understandings to facilitate their pedagogical decisions when teaching these students. The chapter describes how data were collected and analyzed in EMI-related studies and how relevant classroom-based projects can be developed and implemented to enhance teachers’ understandings of critical pedagogical issues. In particular, such studies might enable English language teachers to adopt the most appropriate pedagogical approaches that enhance students’ interactions to facilitate language development.

Waring’s chapter has a much more refined focus on conversation analysis and classroom discourse analysis, which generate significant insights to inform English language teachers’ pedagogical decisions with regard to orchestrating turn-taking, managing participation, giving explanations, conducting corrections, developing learners’ understandings, and addressing multiple demands in the process. These findings, as argued by Waring, will enrich English language teachers’ understandings of what English language teaching should be done in classrooms.

In contrast to the celebration of what qualitative classroom-based research and conversation analysis can offer to English language teachers, Stanley’s chapter problematizes ethnographic research so that it can be improved in English language teaching. Stanley suggests that English language teaching researchers need to reject objective cultural models, problematize the written conventions of ethnographic research reporting, heighten awareness of researcher positionality, and adopt a more robust ethical stance in research. The chapter also problematizes autoethnographic research in English language teaching, suggesting that these researchers might have ignored one or more key tenets of autoethnographic research. Specifically, Stanley argues that autoethnographers in English language teaching need to be committed to promoting social justice through research. The chapter concludes rather provocatively with a request for ethnographic and autoethnographic researchers in English language teaching to focus on serving the needs and interest of “the researched.”

Likewise, Chun and Morgan continue this critical “turn” in English language teaching research by adopting a unique way to present their argument in their chapter. Through an extended dialogue, Chun and Morgan prompt readers to reflect on critical research and practices in English language teaching. Their dialogue covers a wide range of topics explored in critical English language teaching research including identity, discourse, power, and neoliberal capitalism. They also explore various challenges when promoting critical pedagogies and twenty-first-century literacies that English language teachers and learners need to respond to at present and in the future.

Apart from providing English language teachers with professional knowledge through research, it is also important for researchers to understand emotions in English language teachers’ professional lives and better support their efforts to cope with relevant challenges. Benesch’s chapter draws attention to how English language teachers’ emotions are regulated (‘feeling rules’) and how teachers respond to such regulation in the form of compliance or resistance (emotional labor). She illustrates both feeling rules and emotional labor by examining teachers’ implementation of attendance policy and their emotional responses to students’ lateness and absence in an American university. While the attendance policy expects teachers to be both vigilant and flexible about students’ attendance, English language teachers undertake multiple emotion-labor discourses to reconcile themselves with students’ lateness and absence, which will require teacher educators to prepare English language teachers for similar challenges.

In contrast to Benesch’s poststructuralist perspective on emotions in English language teachers’ professional lives, Lowen and Sato’s chapter helps English language teachers to use research on instructed second language acquisition to inform their pedagogical decisions, even though many teachers may feel it challenging to use second language acquisition theories and research findings in teaching. They illustrate what instructed second language acquisition theory and research can offer to language teachers in teaching, especially with regard to explicit and implicit L2 instruction. They argue that instructed second language acquisition research establishes links between theory, research, and pedagogy by making itself highly relevant for English language teaching.

Making any research findings relevant to language teaching depends on language teachers’ cognition—the unobservable dimension of teachers’ professional lives, in Borg’s words. His chapter reviews relevant debates and current perspectives on language teacher cognition. It addresses concerns about the notion being too mentalistic, cognitive, and individualistic. Borg also discusses methodological issues in examining language teacher cognition and argues that diverse methodological approaches, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, can be adopted to understand how language teacher cognition works. The chapter explores how the notion of language teacher cognition has been promoted to maximize its impact on language teacher education. Given that cognitive changes are at the core of language teacher education efforts, Borg concludes the chapter with an updated definition of language teacher education to reflect the aforementioned theoretical and methodological shifts. To achieve relevant cognitive changes, language teachers need to undertake efforts to pursue professional development.

Benitt, Schmitt, and Legutke note the potential that technological advances such as the rise of digital media may hold for English language teachers' professional development. They argue that various technology-enhanced strategies such as organizing online learning platforms, using learning software and educational apps, designing web-based tasks, etc. may be used by language teachers to help learners learn languages. However, the language teachers themselves also need to develop relevant skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes so that they can become competent, critical, and reflective users of the new technology. They also need to reflect on changes to the traditional roles that language learners and teachers are expected to assume in new, technology-enhanced pedagogical environments. The chapter highlights how to develop pre-service language teachers' digital literacies and provides a framework for integrating technology education into language teacher education programs.

The last chapter by Pei, Loughland, Jin, and Nguyen deviates from the focus on language in the previous chapters to focus on the impact of language teacher education programs on the development of their graduates' collective efficacy. Though the theme of this chapter is less closely related to other chapters in this section, it highlights the significance of language teacher education in mediating the implementation of relevant language policies and curricula. The findings from the case study inform the development of policies with regard to language teacher development, which oblige teacher educators and teacher education programs to provide mastery and vicarious experiences, promote collective learning environments and appreciate the influences of affective states on learning for pre-service teachers.

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