Chapter Two: 'More Research is Needed' – A Mantra Too Far?

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Introduction.

In this chapter I shall raise a number of issues connected with the almost universal, yet largely unexamined, credo that research is of prime value in the context of language teaching and learning. I shall argue that research and the practice of teaching are quite different forms of activity, with no necessary connection between them. Each has its own value independently of the other. Typically research is accorded higher status than teaching. (Cook and Seidlhofer, 1995, Griffee, 1997, Kramsch 1995, Strevens, 1978). In my view this is unjustified and has potentially negative consequences for both communities. I shall then examine some of the reasons that academic research has relatively modest value for teaching and learning: the quantity and inaccessibility of data, the relative lack of real relevance for teaching, the difficulty of carrying out reliable research, the fact that even helpful research findings are routinely ignored, and that most advances within language pedagogy do not have their origins in research anyway. One of the justifications often cited for research, especially action research, is its value as a vehicle for teacher development. I shall argue that this is only occasionally the case and that there are perhaps more effective and less expensive ways of helping teachers develop professionally. Finally, I shall try to offer an alternative approach which puts inquiry at the centre of pedagogy, without the need for elaborate and costly schemes of research and without the somewhat unequal relationship which currently obtains. (Cook & Seidlhofer, 1995, Griffee, 1997, McDonough, 1990, Maley, 2003).

Research and teaching/learning are different.

Much of the literature on the relationship between research and pedagogy is directed to finding ways of bringing them closer together. This seems to ignore the fact that the research and the teaching discourse communities are completely different in their philosophy, their aims and their procedures. Ur (2014) among others has drawn attention to the clear differences between them.

The aim of research is to establish the facts and to winnow the truth from them by the testing of hypotheses. This involves intensive and deep thinking in deciding which problems to select and how best to investigate them. This is a relatively lengthy process which may take months or years, and is followed by the patient and time-consuming collection and analysis of data. This kind of thinking has been termed d-mode thinking by Kahneman (2013). It is a deliberate and rational mode of thinking. It is future-oriented, with a view to establishing what is 'true' before actually dealing with it at some later time. No immediate change is envisaged. It is not overly-concerned with action but focuses on investigation, analysis and discussion.

Teaching has to concern itself with real-time action in the immediate present. Planning a lesson is vastly different from the flesh-and-blood encounter which actually takes place in the classroom. (Underhill, 2014, Underhill and Maley, 2012) In dealing with the immediate and unpredictable needs which arise, the teacher must make split-second decisions which allow no time for lengthy reflection. This is what Kahneman (2014) has termed i-thinking, which depends on an intuitive mode. Teachers have to deal with immediate change and have to

focus on surviving daily with a modicum of self-esteem intact after the often bruising realities of the classroom.

Researchers are generally evaluated by their peers on the quantity and quality of their publications, and the influence they are perceived to have on their field of speciality. They are assessed by the confederacy of their peers, that is to say internally. Teachers are generally externally evaluated by their superiors or sponsors in terms of the results they obtain with their students. They are also frequently evaluated implicitly by the students themselves in terms of their effectiveness and their personal qualities. In a small survey of experienced teachers who were asked to recall a teacher who had left an enduring impression and why, the vast majority cited personal qualities and made virtually no mention of professional competence, let alone research. (Maley, 2012, unpublished data). There are also published studies which cast some doubt on the issue of research and its relevance for teaching. (Bolitho 1987, Borg, 2003, 2009; Ellis, 2010, 2012; Nassaji, 2012)

Researchers also enjoy a degree of professional esteem usually not commonly extended to teachers. And with this go somewhat more favourable working conditions than most teachers enjoy, in terms of salary, promotion prospects, working hours, access to publication and availability of time.

In the light of the above, it is clear that the two discourse communities are radically different from each other. They are both legitimate and valuable activities in their own right. What is not legitimate is for one of them (research) to claim ascendancy over the other (teaching).

These points are summarised in the following table:

Research and Teaching: Divergent priorities.

Researchers	Teachers
abstract thought (future)	real-time action (present)
interaction at a distance	interaction at first hand
seeking 'truth'	finding out what works
d-mode (deliberate thinking)	i-mode (intuitive thinking)
no immediate change	immediate change
evaluated on publications, perceived influence on field	evaluated on results
in-group evaluation	external evaluation
high esteem activity	low esteem activity
relatively favourable conditions	relatively poor conditions

(adapted from Ur, 2002)

Why research is not the answer for teachers

To be useful to teachers, research would need to meet the following minimal criteria: it should be relevant to their immediate concerns, reliable, generalizable, accessible, and

applicable. However, all too often academic research does not meet these criteria, and sometimes for good reasons does not intend to.

Irrelevance:

Much of it is irrelevant to teachers' immediate concerns, which have to do with how they might help students learn more effectively. Instead, much research seems to focus on relatively trivial minutiae, or on proving facts which would be obvious even to an uninformed observer. I recently examined a doctoral thesis which, in 200 pages based on 4 years research, proved that anxiety has negative effects on listening comprehension. -It is questionable whether this added much to our understanding. The example could easily be multiplied but the point is I think clear.

Not readily generalizable:

Likewise, research is rarely generalizable, given the specificity of contexts investigated and the small sample sizes. Research done in a secondary school in Greece is not readily applicable to a similar level school in China. And many studies are based on a handful of subjects in university settings, whereas most teaching situations involve larger numbers of younger learners. These small sample sizes render findings non-significant in statistical terms, even if they are suggestive of more general applicability. Paradoxically, the more specific a study is (and therefore more reliable), the less generalizable it is to other contexts (and thus less valid).

Inaccessible:

Most important perhaps is the inaccessibility of research findings. One problem is the sheer quantity of studies now available. Even full-time researchers do not have the time or energy to trawl through the quantity of information now available and to evaluate its usefulness, still less teachers with multiple demands on their time and energy. The information is also not easy to find. It is usually published in specialist journals, books and websites not readily accessible by teachers. It is moreover, often written in a style which is impenetrable for the common reader. The genre constraints of academic discourse often render it abstruse and inaccessible to readers from outside the academic discourse community. The reason for this is clear – it is not written for the common reader (or the teachers); it is written for other researchers. Researchers communicate with other researchers, and this is quite normal. In fact, researchers depend in many cases on teachers to provide the data for their studies - but the returns for teachers are less clear. Researchers often need to draw on teachers as a data resource but are rarely able to offer anything of accessible use in return.

Not applicable:

Needless to say, if research studies are inaccessible, they are most unlikely to be applicable. We cannot apply what we are not aware of or do not understand. Penny Ur (2014) has recently offered a partial solution to the accessibility problem, by suggesting that experienced teachers might act as mediators between the research literature and practising teachers. In a way, this is what some applied linguists have tried to do. (Littlewood, 1984; Lightbown and Spada, 2006), and it is also achieved through conference presentations and workshops. While welcome as a way of making the more useful research accessible, this is unlikely to do anything more than palliate the problem since most teachers do not even read what the mediators write either, and a majority of teachers do not have the opportunity to attend conferences.

Teachers' lack of interest.

Among the reasons teachers cite for not taking account of research are the following: insufficient time, inaccessibility of data, curricular constraints, cultural issues, apathy and conservatism, and the perception that research is not relevant to their immediate concerns. Borg. 2003, 2009) For teachers, research remains of peripheral, not central concern. At best it can be one among many other factors in promoting professional development.

"… the bottom line has to be that for the ELT practitioner the main source of professional learning is classroom experience, enriched by discussion with colleagues, feedback from students, and – for those teachers with the time and inclination – input through reading, conferences and courses, of which research is one important component. Research is not the primary basis of ELT knowledge for the practitioner, but it is a valuable supplement." (Ur, 2012)

The difficulty of carrying out useful and reliable research.

Whereas in the hard sciences it is relatively easy to control the variables involved, this is far from the case with the social sciences. So much so that many have questioned whether the social sciences can be considered science at all. (Toulmin, 1972) Whatever the case, the large number of variables in any kind of research into human behaviour is a major problem. Stevick put his finger on this in articulating his famous riddle:

"In the field of language teaching, Method A is the logical contradiction of Method B; if the assumptions from which A claims to be derived are correct, then B cannot work, and vice versa. Yet one colleague is getting excellent results with A and another is getting comparable results with B. How is this possible?" (Stevick, 1974).

The riddle can, of course be extended: how is it that a given 'method' (or lesson plan, or course-book unit) works with one class and not with another? Or that it works with the same class on one day and not on another? Or that it works with a given class with one teacher and not with another? Clearly the dynamics of classroom interaction are extremely difficult to measure, yet it seems increasingly likely that they are at the core of this issue. (Dornyei and Murphey, 2003; Hadfield, 1992; Underhill, 2014).

There is also the difficulty of interpretation. Identical results can sometimes be construed in different ways, and reliable replication of results is always problematic. As Ellis concludes , after almost 700 pages of detailed description, analysis and discussion of SLA research findings, 'SLA research …is characterised by facts, opinions, explanations, positions and perspectives that frequently exist in an uneasy state of complementarity and opposition' (Ellis 1994).

A bigger problem is the fact that researchers tend to carry out research into what is susceptible of being researched, and in particular what is measurable. Einstein is famously said to have remarked that,
'Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.' Yet it may well be that the unmeasurable factors are the most significant in language teaching: namely, the issue raised by Stevick's riddle, and what Underhill (2014) calls the 'dark matter' of the classroom. Widdowson (1993) has also drawn attention to the difference in language teaching between what he calls 'objectives' and 'aims'. Objectives are defined as time-bound, short-term, atomistic, confined to language and relatively easy to measure; and Aims as being life-long, holistic, extending beyond language into more broadly

developmental growth, and almost impossible to measure. This list of some potential aims offers some idea of just how difficult they would be to research: Social/intercultural awareness, Critical thinking, Creative problem-solving, Autonomous learning, Self-esteem, Self-awareness, Confidence, Cooperation, Responsibility, Attitudinal change. Typically, therefore research in our field opts for objectives-related research and rarely enters the domain of aims.

Of course, all research is not the same. I would make a distinction between 'professional' research (the kind carried out by staff in universities and research institutes), and the kind of 'pseudo-research' done by many MA and many PhD students, which is often more in the nature of a rite of passage than a real contribution to our understanding of how people learn languages or how language works. This latter kind of research exists largely to prove that the candidate has mastered the genre requirements of the thesis – an induction into the research community. Small wonder that so many theses seem to concentrate on trivia when finding a really significant topic has become so difficult. And once completed, it is rare for such works ever to be read, least of all by 'ordinary' teachers. The reason is again obvious: they were not written to be read but simply to satisfy a requirement for a higher degree.

I would also distinguish between research on language itself and on learning language. Corpus research into the nature of natural language has proved a rich source of insights of immediate use and application to materials development. (Hoey, 2005)

And there is the notion of teacher research, to which I shall turn below.

Some effects of the research hegemony in TESOL.

In the past 30 years or so, English language teaching has seen an unprecedented expansion of the importance accorded research. This is due in large measure to the way in which professional development has been linked with academic qualifications. In some ways this has brought benefits. From a miscellaneous group of semi-professional or completely untrained teachers, we have moved to a cadre of teachers with near-professional status.

However, many of the MA and doctoral programmes available have limited relevance for classroom practice. Moreover, there is no demonstrable enhancement of teaching quality from the possession of a higher degree. Such degrees have very little to do with pedagogical competence, and everything to do with academic status. There may even be a negative correlation, as such programmes encourage those who take them to think of teaching as a lower form of activity than theoretical speculation and research. As Kramsch points out,

"...(this) reinforces the traditional dichotomy in academia between those who explore the nature of the input (researchers and scholars), and those who mediate it (teachers). As we know, delivery and mediation have never been as highly regarded in academia as discovery and exegesis. Mediation is viewed with suspicion because it is more difficult to evaluate, assess and control." (Kramsch,1995).

Yet the route to advancement is increasingly controlled by the need to obtain such qualifications.

In parallel with these developments within TESOL, there has been a wider, more general trend in thinking about the functions of universities. Increasingly, they have become viewed as institutions for carrying out research, with their teaching function relegated to a secondary position. This is reflected in the university league tables and rankings, which are based

largely on research, as measured by the number of research publications in double peer-reviewed journals, and scores on citation indexes. And rankings are inevitably linked to sources of funding.

One result of this is the pressure to publish. The old adage, 'Publish or perish' has become all too true, so there is now a torrent of articles, many of which would never have been written were it not for this pressure to publish, and most of which will go unread. "Give academics citation scores and they will churn out dreary articles for other academics." (Skidelsky, 2014) The pressure is so great that academics are now routinely expected to pay journals (especially the new generation of on-line journals) for the privilege of being published. An accumulation of largely unread articles and books is the outcome.

Research findings are routinely ignored.

One interesting fact is that, even when research does make useful discoveries, these are routinely ignored. A good example of this would be research into the best starting age for learning an L2. (Lightbown and Spada,2006) Results show that, except in exceptional circumstances which are close to those of L1 acquisition, such as total immersion, there is no advantage in starting to learn an L2 in infancy. In fact, it is more effective to start around 12-14 years old. In spite of this, ministries of education, private school proprietors and others persist in introducing the L2 at younger and younger ages, acting on the widespread intuitive belief that younger is better.

There is now abundant research into Extensive Reading which shows that, properly conducted, it is indisputably one of the best ways of acquiring, maintaining and extending L2 proficiency. (Day and Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 2004). Despite this evidence, Extensive Reading has yet to occupy the central place in L2 programmes which it seems to merit. These are but two examples of the way research results are frequently ignored.

One conclusion from this is that research is not genuinely valued when its results run counter to popular folk-knowledge, or is inconvenient socially, institutionally or politically.

Where have new ideas in TESOL come from?

If we look back at the major insights and developments in TESOL over the past 50 years or so, the contribution of research is relatively small, especially in view of the vast quantities of time, effort and money expended on it. Lightbown's survey of SLA details the following list of achievements (Lightbown, 2000).

"1. Adults and adolescents can 'acquire a second language'

2. The learner creates a systematic interlanguage…

3. There are predictable sequences in L2 acquisition

4. Practice does not make perfect

5. Knowing a language rule does not mean one will be able to use it in communicative interaction

6. Isolated error correction is usually ineffective in changing language behaviour

7. For most adult Ls, acquisition stops before the L has attained native-like mastery of the target language

8. . One cannot achieve native-like…command of a second language in one hour a day.

9. The learner's task is enormous because language is enormously complex.

10. . A learner's ability to understand language in a meaningful context exceeds their ability to comprehend de-contextualised language and to produce language of comparable complexity and accuracy."

While it is useful to have common-sense intuitions verified by research, the above list does not appear to make a radical contribution to our understanding of how we learn languages.

SLA research is not the only kind of research, of course, and there are arguably more achievements than are listed here, but given the enormous quantity of research (Ellis, 1994), the returns on investment seem exiguous

By contrast, most of the more significant insights and changes in TESOL seem to have come from academics acting as mediators and generators of ideas (rather than as researchers), from materials writers and publishers, and from individual thinkers and practitioners.

The so-called Communicative Approach, for example, came about through the reflection and theoretical speculation of a smallish number of academic pundits such as Wilkins (1972), Widdowson (1978), Candlin (1981) and others, based partly on the ideas of linguistic philosophers, like Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), and partly on ideas about the democratisation of education (van Ek, 1975). It gathered momentum, in the UK at least, through the work of course-book writers such as O'Neill (1971), Abbs and Freebairn (1983), and others working with enlightened publishers such as Cambridge University Press (du Plessis 2013).   Teacher training institutes, such as Reinhardswaldschule in Germany (Candlin and Edelhoff, 1989; Edelhoff 1978, 1978-82), and new teachers' associations, such as Lingua e Nuova Didattica (LEND) in Italy were also highly influential at the national level. It was also supported by organisations such as International House, Bell, Pilgrims and Eurocentres, and through the network of English Language Officers then active with the British Council, and by BBC English by Radio and Television. Research had at most only a minor role to play.

The same is true of the surge of interest in Humanistic approaches in the 1970's and 1980's, based partly on the ideas of psychologists like Rogers (1969) and Vygotsky (1986). Trail-blazing books such as Moskovitz' 'Caring and Sharing in the Language Classroom' (1991) and Stevick's 'Memory, Meaning and Method' (1976) did not have their roots in research. And indefatigable propagators of the approach such as Rinvolucri (2002) focussed on the applicability of such ideas to the classroom and their effect on teachers as people, rather than on research.

The currently fashionable Task-Based Learning approach has its origins in the pragmatic classroom-focussed work of Prabhu in South India (1997). And it owes its subsequent development and spread to the work of others, such as Willis (1996) who have continued to focus on practicable ideas for the classroom.

Currently popular ideas such as Dogme (Thornbury and Meddings, 2009) or Demand-high Teaching (Scrivener, 2014), also owe little or nothing to academic research.

The pattern for most if not all of the recent innovative movements in TESOL has been as follows: Some key people accumulate both experience and information which fuels a 'new

idea', which is then propagated through professional networks, conferences and publications until it is widely adopted (or adapted). Gladwell's connectors, mavens and salesmen diffusion model applies to TESOL as to other fields. (Gladwell, 2000) If research has a role at all it is as a post-hoc evaluation of what has been done, not as a dynamo for innovation.

But what about Research for teacher development?

It is sometimes argued that the kind of experience of in-depth inquiry derived from carrying out research projects is of value primarily not so much for the quality of the research it produces but rather for the way it helps teachers develop professionally. I would readily concede that this is sometimes, though not inevitably, the case. However, I would also suggest that this is a rather wasteful and costly way of promoting teacher development. After all, a one-year MA in the UK can cost between £5000 to £6000, and a PhD anything from £4000 (for UK students) to a staggering £ 15,000 (for overseas students) per annum for 4 years. The cost, taken together with the time and energy expended is considerable.

There are surely many other routes to professional development which are arguably more effective and certainly less costly. These would include:

~ Learning from fellow professionals. For example by joining a professional association, such as IATEFL or TESOL, by engaging in what Aoki (2002) calls 'professional conversations' with colleagues on a regular basis, by taking advantage of mentoring programmes (Malderez and Bodoszky, 1999; Mann and Teng, 2012), by participating in teacher conferences and workshops, and joining in conversations on Twitter and Facebook, as well as blogging.

~ Learning from resources: there is a superabundance of materials, including free websites (see, for example, Stannard: http://teachertrainingvideos.com/ , HLT Magazine: www.hltmag.co.uk, British Council/BBC; www.teachingenglish.org.uk), teachers' magazines with practical information, such as English Teaching Professional, Modern English Teacher, English Language Teaching Journal, etc., And there is an abundance of choice of resource books for teachers. The value of reading 'outside the box' should also not be underestimated: many good ideas come from feeder fields (Maley, 2006) or from domains quite unrelated to TESOL, (Maley, 2009)

~ Learning from involvement in projects. This would include materials writing with colleagues (Tomlinson, 2014), in-house course development, etc.

~ Learning from self-reflection, for example, the activities proposed by Farrell (2013), which are simple and can be done alone or in collaboration with colleagues. Simply keeping a teaching journal can be hugely effective.

None of these require heavy investment in research, yet they stimulate, develop and sustain professional teacher development.

But what about Teachers as Researchers?

One way out of this problem has been to conflate the roles of researcher and teacher. The 'teacher-researcher' movement, documented by Allwright and Bailey (1991), Nunan (1996), Edge and Richards (1993) and many others over the past 25 years or so has somewhat

narrowed the divide between the two communities. In this perspective, the location of research is shifted to the classroom and the events which occur there. And the persons who engage in the research activity are concurrently engaged in the activity of teaching. This appears to go some way to redressing the balance between researchers and teachers, and to re-valorising the activity of teaching

There remain a number of problems even with this new-look research however.

It is still based on the research paradigm (formulation of research questions/hypotheses, collection of data, analysis, results and conclusions), even though the fashion has moved somewhat from a quantitative to a qualitative focus, and there is less insistence on statistical rigour. What I am suggesting is that the research paradigm may not be the most effective way of developing teachers as professionals.

And for all its focus on the teacher, it is normally undertaken in a wider academic context (e.g., as part of an academic course of study such as an MA, under the supervision of non-teacher academics, or as part of a wider programme of research organised by a university academic or other body.) In other words, it remains largely a top-down enterprise, driven by the academic research community at the top and the teachers at the bottom. It is rarely generated by teachers themselves. I

And, if successful as a classroom researcher, the likelihood is that the teacher will migrate away from teaching and be absorbed into the academic discourse community. It is rare indeed for migration to be in the other direction – from researcher to teacher. The reasons are self-evident: higher prestige, fewer classroom hours, better remuneration, etc.

If unsuccessful or dissatisfied, the teacher will probably close her mind to the possibility of ever undertaking classroom research again – remembering the experience as over-demanding in terms of time and effort, and as ultimately stressful and unrewarding. This was certainly the case with MA students I supervised in Singapore and Bangkok. In other words, relatively few 'ordinary' classroom teachers are likely to be engaged in classroom research on a long-term basis.

So, what is to be done? Inquiry?

Clearly, some kinds of research are more useful and comprehensible to teachers than others, but I think it is fair to say that the quantity, complexity and obscurity of much of the nexus of factors discussed above makes it intimidating for most teachers. (For a comprehensive analysis of reasons teachers avoid research, see Ur (2016 forthcoming). What is perhaps more significant is that, by making them feel that, as teachers, they are somehow not quite complete unless they are involved with research, they can lose self-esteem and develop feelings of guilt, inadequacy and incompetence. Such feelings may sometimes be masked by expressions of antipathy to 'research' as 'a lot of rubbish' with no possible relevance to them. I would argue then that the apparently excessive reverence in which research is held is unhealthy for both researchers and for teachers. It can give researchers an erroneous sense of their significance in the language teaching arena, and can devalue the often highly creative work of teachers on a day-to-day basis. What might then be a more satisfactory distribution of power and responsibilities?

It must be clear that I believe the attempt to include teachers in the theory-making process through classroom research has been less successful than might have been hoped, though the work of Allwright and Hanks (2009) in particular, on 'exploratory practice' has made efforts to integrate classroom research and classroom teaching. One possible reason for this relative lack of success is the insistence on the word 'research', which carries with it the intimidating baggage referred to above. If this puts teachers off, as I believe it often does, can we not find another term with which to replace it? After all, we do want teachers to be curious about and involved in their teaching: this is part of the teacher-development process. Rather than insisting on Classroom Research, why not encourage the more modest activity of Inquiry? (Maley, 2003) Being in a constantly inquiring state of mind would be less technically demanding and theoretically threatening, yet equally valuable professionally.

But what do I mean by Inquiry? One aspect would be the way we formulate questions about our work. 'I wonder why…?', 'What would happen if…?', 'Could I find another way of doing that?' etc. To address questions such as these there is no compelling need to undertake research projects. They can equally well be tackled by more modest and more economical means as suggested above.

Research/Inquiry

What then distinguishes Research from Inquiry? In the table below I have tried to outline some key characteristics which I shall go on to gloss:

Why

Research	**Inquiry**
Theory-building	Problem-solving
Future value	Immediate value
Academic	Pragmatic
Global	Local
Commitment to Research Community	Commitment to Learners
Sense of certainty	Sense of Plausibility

Who?

By outsiders (Them)	By insiders (Us)
By 'experts'	By practitioners
'impersonal'	Personal
Top-down	Bottom-up

How? (How long?)

Closed-ended	Open-ended
Finite	Continuing
Narrow-focus	Holistic
Generalisable	Particularised
Segregated	Integrated
Scientific	Intuitive
Epochal	Incremental

Let me now gloss the above points:

Why?

What are the differing reasons/justifications for carrying out Research or Inquiry? Despite the recent move towards classroom research, the research enterprise as a whole is still largely determined by the academic discourse community. The purpose of research is to discover truth, and to build theories based upon it. It is about pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge by offering better, more empirically-tested facts and interpretations. These will be of global reach, not confined to a narrow context. It has no need to render account to teachers or learners.

By contrast, the main reason to pursue what I am calling Inquiry, is to solve immediate problems, or answer urgent personally-relevant questions, or simply out of curiosity. It is essentially pragmatic therefore, and necessarily local in scope.   It has no ambitions to formulate theories which apply universally. Its primary commitment is to learners, and perhaps to other teachers with a similar problem or question. Rather than seeking a sense of certainty, it is tentative and provisional, attempting to find out how new information or insights can be fitted into the individual's frame of beliefs as to what is plausible and feasible for her at a given moment. Prabhu (1990) has called this the 'teacher's sense of plausibility'.

Who?

Research is almost always conducted by outsiders to the situation, by 'them'. The researcher is typically an expert, trained (or training) in how to do research. (Griffee,1996). Necessarily such an outsider has a relatively impersonal relationship with the context he/she is operating in. In fact, impartiality is often held up as a virtue. To be too personally-involved would pollute the data. The researcher's agenda then is imposed from above on the situation being investigated.

With Inquiry, the person doing it is necessarily an insider: 'us' or more frequently, just 'me'. He/she is not an expert, except in the important sense of knowing the context from the inside. The strength of this position is that it is intensely personal: feelings are at least as important as facts. It works from the bottom, the lived experience of the observer/inquirer.

How?

It is necessary for research to be finite, to have closure, however provisional that closure may be. Without an endpoint in view, it cannot report results. The scientific aspect of research is manifest in its compulsion to measure things, as far as possible ensuring that what is

measured is significant. It also tends to have a narrow-focus. Research students are constantly being enjoined to 'narrow your focus' (Szesztay, 2003). Unless they do this, it is difficult to come to unambiguous conclusions. They must somehow ring-fence the phenomenon they wish to study, to segregate it, otherwise too many variables may put their results in doubt. However, as Greenfield has pointed out in another context,

"Facts on their own are not enough! While collecting information is gathering dots, knowledge is joining them up.   „„ the more connections you can make across an ever wider and disparate range of knowledge, the more deeply you will understand something." (Greenfield, 2014: p250).

And as Toulmin claimed in relation to scientific inquiry in general:

"In practical life we have to deal with problems as we find them, in all their specific concrete complexity; and we cannot solve them in a way that does justice to this complexity, if we start by sub-dividing the issues involved and deliberately ignoring those aspects for which we have no well-established type of procedure." (Toulmin 1971: p 40)

The narrowing vision of much research does not do justice to this complexity. Knowing more and more about less and less is no way to approach the infinite complexity of teaching and learning.

This 'scientific' approach also has a paradoxical result as I have pointed out above. The more carefully the research controls for variables, the less likely it is that the context will be replicated elsewhere. The more unique it is, the less generalisable it becomes. Catch 22. Given that research hopes to reveal 'epochal', that is highly significant and generalisable conclusions, this seems like a serious defect in the paradigm.

By contrast, Inquiry is open-ended and continuing. Nothing is ever decided for all time; everything is necessarily provisional as the teacher-inquirer moves between different classes and situations, and confronts new problems. It focuses on a holistic understanding. As Margit Szesztay (2003) puts it when discussing her doctoral research, "I wanted to arrive at the kind of knowledge which allows me to understand the 'interconnectedness' of the various aspects of facilitating discussions."   Inquiry is particularised since everyone who undertakes it does so in their own personal and social context, so it is necessarily integrated into the whole of their experience. There is little or no concern with measuring things in a scientific way. The focus is rather on noticing things, and connecting them: an intuitive process. This slow piecing together of understandings is incremental: a series of small steps with no ambition to make a major impact on the field at large. It is a modest undertaking, and it is feasible.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have set out arguments against the current pre-eminence of research as a source of knowledge within the TESOL domain. The Research community and the Teaching community are fundamentally different enterprises, and have no necessary connection or hierarchical relationship. There is certainly no case for research to be considered a higher form of activity given its relatively modest contribution to teaching.

I have also suggested that teacher research may not be the most appropriate form of professional development. (I do not, of course, suggest teachers should never undertake research.) Generally, research and theorising, which are the province of a quite different discourse community, tend to intimidate teachers, who, in any case frequently find them of limited relevance to their own professional, teacherly concerns.

My proposal is therefore that we recognise the value and legitimacy of research and theory-building within its own domain. But we should not expect it to have any necessary or close link with the activity of teaching.

Likewise I propose that we valorise the activity of informal, personal inquiry into teaching by teachers, and relieve them of the feeling that they ought to be engaging in some form of academic research. I have suggested that by calling some forms of classroom investigation 'classroom research' we may be giving teachers status – but not on their own terms. All too often I believe we may be loading such activity with the mistaken belief that teachers need to prove themselves in others' terms, rather than in their own. Classroom research is not the only valid way of knowing. Let us take pride in our competence as inquiring teachers, rather than pretending to be something we are not.

Doubtless, there will be those who will criticise my views as being no more than assertions unsupported by empirical research. In response, I would ask where the empirical evidence is to be found which supports the view of research as an essential contributor to more effective language learning? If large-scale studies conclusively proving the effectiveness of research for teaching have been conducted, I have missed them. I would also point out that my views reflect what many teachers in many different countries (and even some researchers) have reported to me about research and language teaching.

I would like to stress though that my chapter is not an attack on researchers or on research per se. It is an attempt to point out the problematic relationship between the research community and the teaching community and to offer ways of improving it. I respect most researchers for the work they are doing and I am aware that some of them, for good reasons, make no claim to have made a significant contribution to language teaching.

I shall close with Stevick's views on research.

"The usual modern answer to unresolved questions such as those listed above (*i.e. his riddle*) is to recommend that there be more research, and that teachers try to stay abreast of it. The call the 'keep up with the (i.e. *our*) latest research' is based on a belief that past failures have been due to insufficient *knowledge*, and that therefore we need to know more.   If, on the other hand, we start from the assumption that past failures – and successes – have come from the degree of *wisdom* with which we have handled what we have known at the time, then the urgency of research appears smaller. From this same position, the persons of the teacher and the teacher trainer – the very factors that much 'controlled research' … seek to eliminate or to become independent of begin to loom large. But such a conclusion is repugnant to creatures of a culture that has so committed to exactness, interchangeability, predictability, and economies of scale. So we flee back to the temples of science, to its priesthood that can feed us on reliability and validity, no matter in how small morsels, and whose 'pie in the sky' will become available for eating after all 'further needed research' has been completed, replicated, field-tested and applied." (Stevick 1976)

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