

Research in the English language classroom

Introduction

In this teacher development activity, participants look at the role of research in the language classroom and explore some examples of teacher led research. They then try to duplicate one of the teacher research projects in their own classroom.



This activity draws on materials and ideas presented by Chris Sowton in his presentation 'What Paulo Freire can teach us about the ELT classroom.'

Webinar time reference: 24:00 – 27:55

Time: 50 – 60 minutes

Aim: To encourage participants to get involved in classroom research.

Preparation:

- Read through 'Champion Teachers: Stories of exploratory action research':

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_british_council_champion_teachers_1.pdf

Procedure

- Ask participants what part research plays in their teaching practice and the application of teaching methodology in their classroom.

- Give them some time to discuss and then get some feedback.
- Tell the participants that research is often separated from the processes and practice of everyday teaching. Point out some of the reasons for this.
Reasons for this disconnect:
 - Teachers lack access (and finances to access) paywalled academic research
 - Teachers lack time to implement evidence-led research
 - Teachers are often not supported by other educational stakeholders in implementing changes (e.g. due to assessment pressures)
- Point out that according to Pablo Freire, “Dialogical theory requires that the world be unveiled. No one can, however, unveil the world for another.” The implications of this are that teachers should be involved in Action Research in the classroom.
- Give the participants a link to the British Council publication ‘Champion Teachers: Stories of exploratory action research’:
https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_british_council_champion_teachers_1.pdf
- Ask the participants to look at the contents list and choose one of the 9 research reports to read about. Note: You could assign these equally among your participants.
- Ask the participants to quickly skim read their research report and produce a 4 – 5 sentence summary of the report.
- Once they have completed their summary, group the participants who read different reports and ask them to share their summaries of what they read.
- Ask the participants to choose one of the topics that interests them and try to do similar research in their own classroom.
- Once they have chosen which one they want to do, ask them to meet again in a number of weeks and report back on what they learned from their action research project.

Materials:

‘Champion Teachers: Stories of exploratory action research’:

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_british_council_champion_teachers_1.pdf

Additional resources

Action research

- This article Cheron Verster, teacher trainer and materials developer, looks at the benefits of action research.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/action-research>

Classroom action research

- In this step-by-step task, we look at what classroom action research is and how to get started. Classroom action research begins with a question or questions about classroom experiences, issues, or challenges. It is a reflective process which helps teachers to explore and examine aspects of teaching and learning and to take action to change and improve.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/classroom-action-research>

A handbook for exploratory action research

- This is a practical handbook, written in a non-academic, teacher-friendly style, to show teachers how they can engage in research. The handbook takes teachers through the steps of exploratory action research, an approach to teacher-research for professional development.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/handbook-exploratory-action-research>

International research into teacher professional development: implications in the current context

- This webinar is based on the findings of a 2014 comparative research study into recruitment, retention and in-service training of English language teachers in public schools/universities in Latin America (Brazil, Colombia and Mexico) and the Middle East (Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, with Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia grouped together).

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/international-research-teacher-professional-development-implications-current-context>