Research in TESOL
Writing Research Papers
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Points to Discuss

- What is research?
- Why researching?
- What is researchable?
- What are the conditions for conducting research?
- What is quality in TESOL research?

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Defining Research

A testing ground for the beliefs and assumptions on which practice is based and also a source for new practices. "What defines the research basis of TESOL is the focus on the theoretical foundations of TESOL practices as well as the significance of theory for successful practice" (Richards, 2001, 215).

Defining Research

A spirited inquiry and systematic investigation that contributes to the knowledge base of a field--knowledge that provides a principled basis for making decisions about policies, plans, and actions (TESOL Agenda, 2014).

Purposes of Research

- Provide a principled basis for understanding language teaching and learning

- Make decisions about policies, plans, and actions.

- Improve the processes, outcomes, and conditions for assessment, teaching and learning.

Purposes of Research

- Improve L2 instruction materials in schools and workplaces.

- Inform policy makers at local, regional, national, and global levels.

- Elucidate controversy and clarify myths related to L2 issues.

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Purposes of Research

- Reflect on urgent social and political needs around the world
- Become critical and reflective regarding our roles and practices.

What are your purposes for writing a research paper?

Features of TESOL Research

- Flexible and inclusive.
- Valuable results come from university researchers and from teachers in their own classrooms.
- ELL can be researched from global to local perspectives.
- It is supported by SLA, linguistics, psychology, technology and other fields.

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Research Topics

- Age of Beginning Instruction
- Dual language education for English Language Learners
- Interaction in the Classroom
- Language Assessment and Program Evaluation
- Learning to read in an L2

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Research Topics

- English as a Global Language
- Learning English for Academic and Occupational Purposes
- Teacher Learning and Student Learning in TESOL
- Teacher Preparation and Development

Duff, Bailey, Tucker, Christian, Lynch, De Bot, Nunan, Lightbown, Snow (2001)

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Conditions for Research

1. *Awareness*

Acknowledge that in teacher research the goal is *understanding* rather than *proof*. (especially in research papers)

Realize the advantages of researching.

Know that every teacher can become a researcher.

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Conditions for Research

2. *Motivation*

Knowing the benefits of research is not enough. Ts must have a reason for wanting to engage in research.

Conditions for Research

3. Knowledge and Skills

Wanting is not enough: Ts need to be aware of research theory and the options they have to make informed decisions about data collection, data analysis, writing reports and so on.

Conditions for Research

4. *Choice*

The freedom to make decisions and to get involved at different levels in research promotes teacher support and leadership.

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Conditions for Research

5. *Mentoring and scaffolding*

Support can be provided by assisting in setting up a general framework for the research, helping Ts find a focus and commenting on Ts initial attempts to collect and analyze data or writing a report.

Conditions for Research

6. *Time*

Teachers do not research due to lack of time. We may need to "bargain" in order to get the needed time. Team effort is key here.

Conditions for Research

7. *Recognition*

Recognize that your classroom is a site for generating knowledge, not only for teaching and learning. Your practices are worth analyzing.

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Conditions for Research

8. Expectations

There should be high expectations for Ts: being a professional entails researching our work.

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Conditions for Research

9. *Community*

Working as part of a community will be more productive. If there is administrative support and opportunities to interact with other institutions, research can be benefited.

Conditions for Research

10. *Dissemination Potential*

Teachers need mechanisms to disseminate the results of research (newsletters, websites, professional events – ASOCOPI). It can motivate, develop new knowledge and skills, and strengthen your community (Borg, 2006).

Quality in TESOL Research

Effective research questions are unambiguous, specific, answerable and focus on matters worth studying; a context for research is identified and a strong review of literature helps justify the project.

Think about three possible questions for your research paper.

Quality in TESOL Research

We need to choose a research method adequate for our topic and suitable for justification of the project.

The theory and planning need to be effectively transferred into actions.

Research needs to make a contribution to your professional practice, your institution, your context, policy makers, administrators.

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Quality in TESOL Research

All angles on an issue need to be considered and supported by evidence, speculation and bias are avoided. So is finding evidence only of the point you want to make.

Results need to be coherent. Ideas need to be logically connected, key theory must be present and relate to the findings.

Borg (2011), Taylor (2002)

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