

**The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: exploring
one person's interaction with the wider TEYL community
of practice**

**An integrative chapter in support of submission for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Publication at the University of
York**

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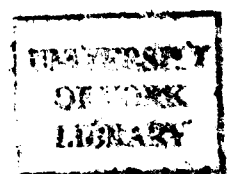
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The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: exploring one person's interaction with the wider TEYL community of practice

Abstract

This Integrative Chapter outlines how one person's practice reflects the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) principles. It opens with a brief discussion of this career and how the purpose of it of late has been to address the needs of those involved in the TEYL community of practice.

The Integrative Chapter then briefly discusses Boyer's work on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and, within this discussion, highlights his four functions of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, which are:

- The Scholarship of Discovery
- The Scholarship of Integration
- The Scholarship of Application
- The Scholarship of Teaching (Boyer, 1990)

These four functions of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning create the background against which are presented aspects of this practice and publications to illustrate how they fit within each of these functions.

Additionally, within each function, there are descriptions of the publications submitted, and, where relevant, the overlapping and linked work on the Masters in Teaching English to Young Learners. Discussion further illustrates how this practice particularly focuses on addressing the needs of those in the TEYL community of practice, including young learners, teachers, teacher trainers, teaching associations and publishers.

Within the Integrative Chapter is shown the way in which, within the spirit of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, this career has tried to address gaps in the provision of continuing professional development courses for those involved in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) and for other professional needs within the field of TEYL and the wider TEYL community of practice.

Contents

List of Figures and Tables	4
List of Accompanying Material.....	5
Acknowledgements.....	7
Author's Declaration	8
Summary	9
1. Introduction	10
1.1. Learners.....	11
2. Linking My Publications and Practice with the SoTL.....	12
2.1. Catering for TEYL Practitioners.....	14
2.2. How my work fits within the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning	15
3. The Scholarship of Teaching.....	17
3.1. Online teaching programme for those new to TEYL	18
3.2. Materials created for the MA in TEYL	19
3.3. Changes to the MA in TEYL Programme since 1997	22
3.4. Feedback on the MA in TEYL Programme	22
3.5. The MA in TEYL within the SoTL linked to Kreber and Cranton's matrix model	23
3.6. The TEYL Community of Practice	27
4. The Scholarship of Discovery	29
4.1. My practice in the Scholarship of Discovery linked directly with the student action research projects.....	29
4.2. Research with MA in TEYL colleagues on action research reports	31
4.3. Student Involvement in Research and Graduate Presentations	31
5. The Scholarship of Integration	33
5.1. The three-stage journey in TEYL	33
5.2. The teaching of reading in TEYL	34
5.3. Action research for TEYL practitioners.....	35
6. The Scholarship of Application.....	37
6.1. Using real stories and authentic books in TEYL.....	37
6.2. Meaningful and Purposeful Language Learning Activities	38
6.3. Shrek – an example of a TEYL reader	39
7. Conclusion	40
References.....	41

List of Figures and Tables

Figure	Page
1. An overview of my professional practice across the four areas of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: the Scholarship of Discovery, the Scholarship of Integration, the Scholarship of Application and the Scholarship of Teaching	13
2. The Cyclical overlapping and non-separated aspects of my practice	16
3. Overview of the four functions of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as described by Boyer (Boyer,1990)	17
4. A Diagrammatic Overview of the MA in TEYL	21
5. Kreber and Cranton's model of the Scholarship of Teaching (Kreber & Cranton, 2000:485)	24
6. Examples of the SoTL being carried out by the MA in TEYL Team, the students and the young learners	27
Tables	
1. Kreber and Cranton's matrix of the Scholarship of Teaching with input on the MA in TEYL (adapted from Kreber & Cranton 2000:485)	25 & 26

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In particular I would like to dedicate my work to Peter, Kate and Laura, to Robbie and, in memoriam, to Digby and Mona.

Author's Declaration

All the publications accompanying this Integrative Chapter have been written by me, except for:

Hughes, A. Marjan, H. & Taylor, N. (2011d) 'Action research in TEYL: reflections on the global picture from 1996-2010' in Hasselgreen, A. Drew, I. and Sørheim, B. (Eds.) *Understanding the language Classroom : research-based insights into language teaching and learning in primary and lower secondary school.* Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget

My contribution to this chapter was just over 50% or approximately 2700 words

Summary

The Integrative Chapter and my submitted publications

This Integrative Chapter is a summary of, and reflection upon, my professional practice, in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) and how my publications over the last eight years have informed my practice. It will also show how my professional writing and work on the Masters in Teaching English to Young Learners (MA in TEYL) can be firmly placed within a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) model (Boyer 1990)

1. Introduction

As I began writing this Integrative Chapter, I realized that it was exactly forty years since I started my teaching career, carrying out my first teaching practice at a middle school in London.

In this submission, I hope to show how, during the most recent years of this career, I have actively explored, taken part in, informed and enlarged a TEYL 'community of practice' or *"groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"* (Wenger, 2011)

My work has been developed with the TEYL practitioner in mind, which I hope to make clear in this Integrative Chapter.

It is only recently, through the advice of my internal advisor for this submission, that I have been introduced to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning movement (SoTL). I realize that my own practice - which so often felt very different from that of my university colleagues, especially those focusing on research - does, in fact, soundly reflect the principles of the SoTL movement.

I am not alone in being unaware of the SoTL, as Boshier outlined: *"...most university faculty members or academic staff do not know what SoTL means nor do they have many incentives to learn about it."* (Boshier, 2009:1).

Finding out that my work has the characteristics and principles of the SoTL was a delightful discovery. It made me feel that, in a professional sense, I had come home, and I am very pleased that I have been 'doing' SoTL for so long, even though I didn't realize it.

Indeed, following on from my personal discovery of the SoTL, I then read that Shulman had discovered the very same thing, as he describes:

'Like Moliere's character in 'The Imaginary Invalid', Monsieur Jourdain, who learns from his philosophy master that he has been speaking prose all his life and never knew it, I realized in retrospect that I had been engaged in the scholarship of teaching and learning for many years and hadn't so named it' (Shulman, 2011 : 4)

During my own discovery of the SoTL, it was reassuring to read Boyer's statement about scholarship: *"We strongly affirm the importance of research ...But to define the work of the professoriate narrowly – chiefly in terms of the research model – is to deny many powerful realities. It is our central premis, therefore, that other forms of scholarship – teaching, integration, and application – must be fully acknowledged and placed on a more equal footing with discovery."* (Boyer, 1990:75)

By this discovery, I can now see how my own pedagogical beliefs and practice are underpinned by the principles of the SoTL movement. As Dreager and Price put it:

"...virtue requires being in the habit of doing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons, with the right motivation, under the appropriate circumstances. SoTL is

important because it can document the most effective ways to acquire virtues and the conditions most likely to allow them to thrive. As with physical health, however, individual learners will need to acquire the habits for themselves.” (Draeger and Price, 2011: 6)

In this Integrative Chapter I hope to illustrate how I believe I did the right thing at the right time for the right reasons with the right motivation.

1.1. Learners

I care deeply about teaching and learning. I always have and I believe I always will. I particularly care about learners, whatever their age - kindergarteners to the silver-haired.

As a reflective practitioner, I have learnt an enormous amount from, been fascinated by, and so often been in awe of, the work of my own students (Schon, 1983). It is because of these students that I am motivated to learn more about TEYL and present this understanding to the wider TEYL community of practice.

It is also because of the dearth of TEYL focused materials and research findings available to the wider TEYL community, that I have felt encouraged to try to ‘fill the gaps’. I have done this not only by providing continuing professional development courses, such as the MA in TEYL, but also through my publications, presentations and ‘service’ on different aspects of TEYL (Boyer, 1990:11). As Shulman highlights:

“A true scholar is a well prepared professional. She is not simply one who does the work; a scholar is someone who regularly and constantly steps back from the doing and reflects on what it means. That’s why writing is so important for scholarship. Scholars are obligated to share their ideas through publication, presentation, and teaching because going public is the ultimate test of the quality of an idea...”
(Shulman, 2002:40)

I am still feeling like a learner, even after forty years of practice, and am keen to seek further knowledge and understanding of TEYL because, as Boyer encouragingly stated:

“At the end of the spectrum, older professors also need new challenges if they are to avoid the worst hazards of disengagements – feeling isolated from disciplinary developments and irrelevant to institutional concerns. What is most certain, and must be more fully recognised, that the faculty in late career stages still have considerable capacity for growth.” (Boyer, 1990:46)

This Integrative Chapter will discuss my practice further, with particular reference to the MA in TEYL and my publications over the last eight year, to show how this work fits within the four functions of the SoTL outlined by Boyer (Boyer, 1990).

2. Linking My Publications and Practice with the SoTL

This section of the Integrative Chapter will outline aspects of my professional development as involvement in the SoTL, through the creation and delivery of the MA in TEYL and the submission of some of my publications from the last eight years. In particular, it will outline why and how the MA in TEYL programme and these publications were written, who they were created for and why they have filled a professional gap for TEYL practitioners.

Background

My career to date has involved working in a wide variety of learning and teaching situations. The knowledge I have gained through these experiences has greatly enriched my professional understanding and taught me that the needs of the individual learner must be placed at the forefront of teaching. I have also come to realise that a teacher needs to be pedagogically flexible and creative in order to meet different learner needs. Some of this practice, and how it fits with the four functions of the SoTL, can be seen in Figure 1 below.

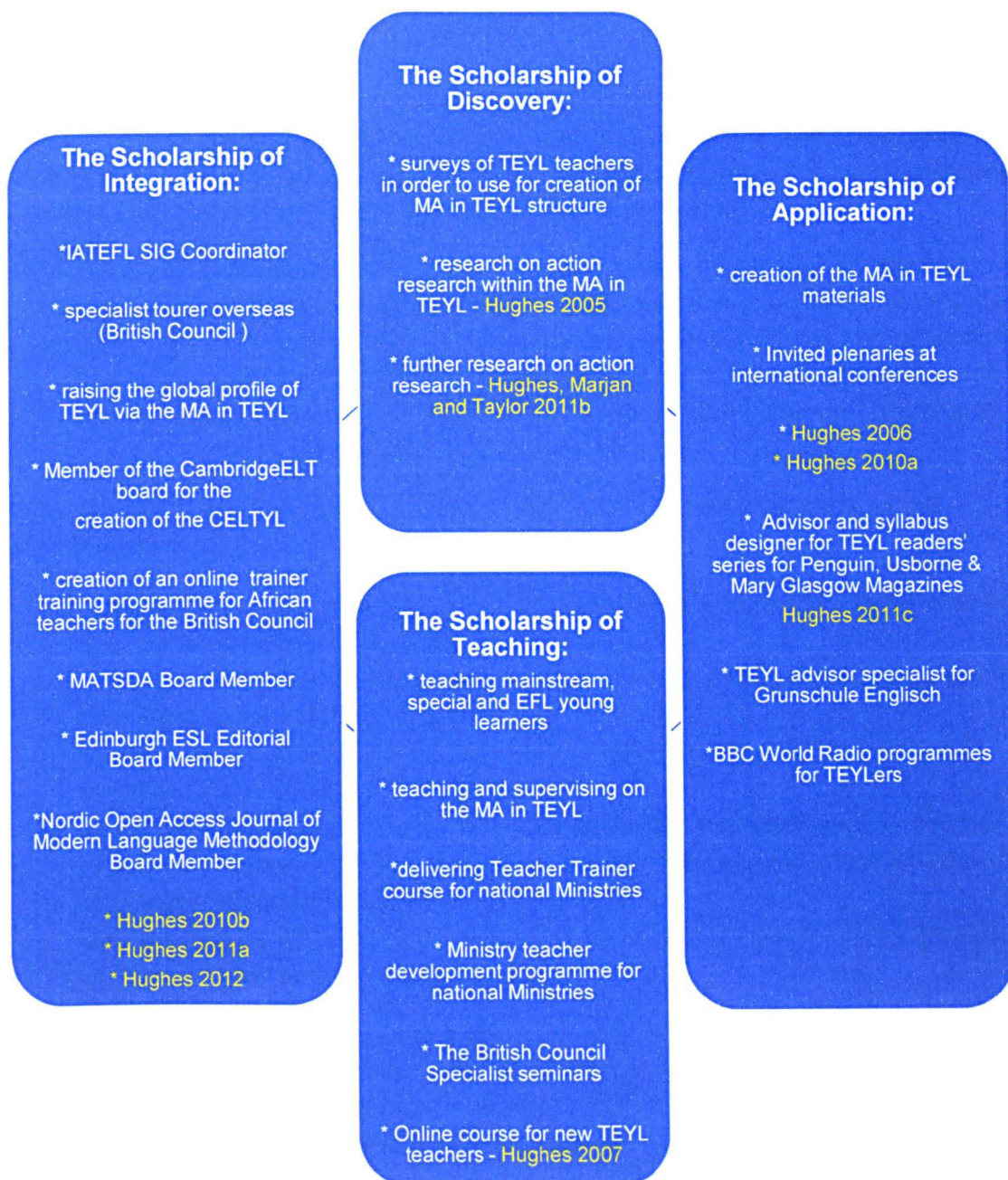


Figure 1. An overview of my professional practice across the four areas of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Scholarship of Discovery, the Scholarship of Integration, the Scholarship of Application and the Scholarship of Teaching.

(Highlighted in yellow are the publications submitted with this Integrative Chapter)

2.1. Catering for TEYL Practitioners

During my varied professional experiences, I realized that there was a large gap in the support for TEYL practitioners. When I was involved in such roles myself, I continually sought further information and asked many questions because there was so little available for TEYL professionals. As Hutchings, Huber and Ciccone state:

“Engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning’s cycle of inquiry and improvement allows teachers to identify and investigate questions that they care about their students’ learning and bring what they’ve found back to their classrooms and programs in the forms of new curricula, new assessments and assignments, and new pedagogies, which in turn become subjects of further inquiry.” (Hutchings, Huber & Ciccone, 2011:4)

At the core of my practice, whether working with adults or young learners, is the understanding that:

- teaching and learning involves scaffolding by the teacher and meaning making by the learner (Bruner, 1983; 1986; 2009)
- it is important that both learner and teacher develop a reflective approach to their learning or teaching (Schon, 1983)
- it is important that both teacher and learner develop and learn experientially (Hughes, 2007, 2012; 2010a; 2010b)
- it is important that both teacher and learner identify how they learn in different situations (Gardner, 1993) and develop strategies for adapting their teaching or learning to accommodate this (Hughes, 2007)
- learners require different types of scaffolding at different times of and for different contexts of their learning (Hughes, 2007).

As the provision for TEYL continuing professional development (CPD) and input on TEYL practice was so lacking, I decided to address these gaps in the wider TEYL community of practice. In particular, I felt there was a shortfall not only in TEYL CPD courses, but in understanding about TEYL, research into aspects of TEYL and materials for TEYL delivery. So in my own practice, I:

- created TEYL CPD courses at different levels of input to address different TEYL practitioner needs. These courses also addressed the fact that many TEYL practitioners were geographically spread out and not able to attend face-to-face courses on campus but, instead, would need a distance or online delivery. In particular, these included the MA in TEYL and An Introductory Course in TEYL (Hughes, 2007).
- presented at conferences on TEYL, often writing papers and chapters based on these presentations, in order to raise the profile of the TEYL learner and the needs of the TEYL practitioner (Hughes, 2005; Hughes, 2006)
- undertook research on TEYL action research with colleagues (Hughes, 2005; Hughes, Marjan & Taylor 2011b)

- produced different materials for TEYL (Hughes, 2006; Hughes, 2010a)
- worked with a range of publishers to create readers suitable for TEYL classrooms (Hughes, 2011c)

In each of my CPD teaching roles, it was clear that the learners, (TEYL teachers), needed guidance, structure, scaffolding, mentoring, and a clear view of what they were learning and why, similar to the learning needs of young language learners.

As a guide to such CPD on the MA in TEYL and in face-to-face contact with TEYL practitioners, I use both Woodward's *loop-input* approach (Woodward, 1991; 2003) and the reflective practitioner approach (Schon 1983).

All CPD, whatever the topic, needs a balance of principles and practice, while being meaningful for the teachers. In order for them to understand the link between the CPD input and their own practice, they often need to learn how to learn themselves, and then reflect on their own practice linked to these experiences.

Above all, learning and development for adults (as for children), needs to be meaningful, purposeful and relevant, fitting their own learning contexts and needs (Hughes, 2007; Hughes, 2010a; Hughes, 2010b; Hughes, 2011a).

I will now present my practice and outline how it fits with, and forms a coherent body of work within, the four functions of the SoTL, as outlined by Boyer. (Boyer, 1990).

2.2. How my work fits within the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Discussion of the principles involved in the scholarship of teaching and learning at tertiary level can be traced back many, many years (Bender, 2005), (Boyer, 1990; 1991). However, Boyer's more recent, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Boyer, 1990) has injected fresh energy into the debate during just the last twenty years.

Boyer focused on the need to describe what university 'scholarship' should include, and set out to define it (Boyer, 1990). He wanted to establish how the work of faculty could be seen as more encompassing than two entrenched and opposing ideas of "*research verses teaching*", because:

"This conflict of academic functions demoralizes the professoriate, erodes the vitality of the institution and cannot help but have a negative impact on students" (Boyer, 1990:2).

He wished that a "*...more dynamic understanding of scholarship ... be considered, one in which the rigid categories of teaching, research, and service are broadened and more flexibly defined*" (Boyer, 1990:16) .

As he felt “...the time has come to move beyond the tired old “teaching versus research” debate and give the familiar and honourable term “scholarship” a broader, more capacious meaning, one that brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work.” (Boyer, 1990:16)

And he also felt it was possible for “great teachers” to “create a common ground of intellectual commitment to be critical, creative thinkers” further highlighting that “good teaching means that faculty, as scholars, are also learners.” (Boyer, 1990:24)

Importantly, Boyer particularly outlined that:

“...the work of the professoriate might be thought of as having four separate, yet overlapping, functions. These are: the scholarship of discovery; the scholarship of integration; the scholarship of application; and the scholarship of teaching.” (Boyer, 1990:16)

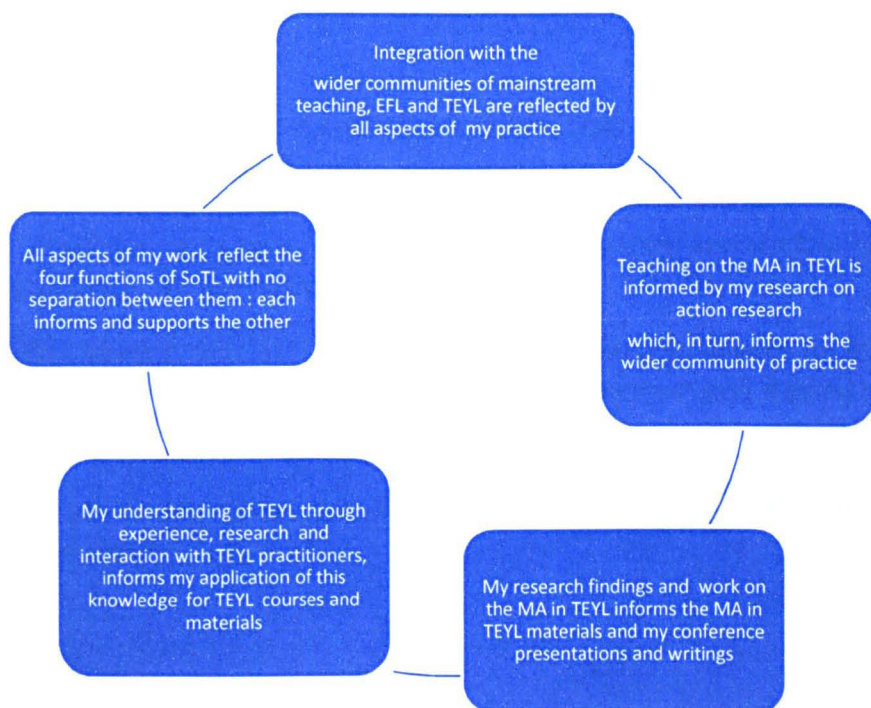
and elaborated on this model by saying:

“What we urgently need today is a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar – a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice and through teaching.” (Boyer 1991:11)

It is in terms of Boyer’s four functions of the SoTL movement that I will now present my publications and work on the MA in TEYL, starting with the Scholarship of Teaching.

It is important to note here that my work overlaps each of these functions with no separation, with each informing and supporting the other in a cyclical pattern (See Figure 2 below).

Figure 2 The cyclical, overlapping and non separated aspects of my practice



3.1. Online teaching programme for those new to TEYL

The first of these is an extensive online teacher development course for those new to TEYL and with little experience, which I address in Hughes, A (2007) *An Introduction To Teaching English to Young Learners*. Thomson ELT (USA) Complete Online Advantage Training. Boston: Heinle Cengage.

This course can be accessed at:

[http://eltadvantage.ed2go.com/eltadvantage/online_course/3te/detail/An Introduction to Teaching English to Young Learners.html?CategoryId+95](http://eltadvantage.ed2go.com/eltadvantage/online_course/3te/detail/An_Introduction_to_Teaching_English_to_Young_Learners.html?CategoryId+95)

My aims when creating this task-based, reflective course for those with little experience or confidence in TEYL were to scaffold and extend the teachers' understanding of TEYL. I first introduce them to the theories which underpin it, then discuss topics and practical classroom activities, in the rest of the course, within the context of this understanding.

My objectives in the course were to teach about different TEYL based topics in order to equip them for the practical TEYL classroom.

The methodology used for presenting this course was that all teaching would be online, within 12 Lessons, with each lesson having 5 Chapters. At the end of each lesson there would also be:

- A Glossary –to define terminology used in the Lesson
- Follow up reading for those who wanted to read more about the topic
- A Bibliography citing the works mentioned in the Lesson
- Support Materials, which would include more activities and materials linked to each Lesson
- A Lesson Quiz which would encourage students to check if they have understood each lesson.

There are also Assignments for students to complete and submit, in order to gain a certificate.

Within the online Lesson, is a video recording of me introducing each Lesson and explaining the aims of it.

The Lessons covered in this online course are:

- Lesson 1: How Do Young Learners Learn Language?
- Lesson 2: Implications for Teaching English to Young Learners
- Lesson 3: Teaching Languages to Young Learners
- Lesson 4: Teaching Listening in English for Young Learners
- Lesson 5: Teaching Speaking in English for Young Learners
- Lesson 6: Teaching Reading in English for Young Learners
- Lesson 7: Teaching Writing in English for Young Learners
- Lesson 8: Using Stories when Teaching English to Young Learners

Lesson 9: Using Songs, Rhymes, Chants and Poems in the Language Classroom

Lesson 10: Using Games in the Language Classroom

Lesson 11: Using Presentations, Puppets, Videos, Role-play and drama in Teaching English to Young Learners

Lesson 12: Evaluation, Assessment and Research in English for Young Learners

The results of the online course are very positive and many teachers new to teaching, with little confidence in their own ability, value the programme very much. The course has a full-time teaching assistant interacting with the students as they work through the course and assignments, monitoring and directing their learning.

The following examples of feedback from students, as they complete this course, show that it is valued and useful for these teachers:

...I have discovered a strong interest in teaching young learners, which I didn't know I had...I found the course so useful and interesting that I plan to take more soon. Thank you for such an amazing job!

I think that this course was good because it has clear topics and explanations.

I really liked this course and it helped me understand a lot about young learners. ...the lessons were pretty clear and interesting.

I know more about methods when teaching to young learners thanks to this course. Thank you for the opportunity.

... this course was really successful for me. Every chapter in this course had some advantages for teaching young children...It was really amazing...I can get many ideas for how to teach and have a good environment in my class.

It really helped me improve my teaching skills

I will now discuss the 'teaching' aspect, of the MA in TEYL.

3.2. Materials created for the MA in TEYL

The materials created for the MA in TEYL were very different from any other materials I had created before in my practice. These materials needed to be complete before students were even enrolled on the programme.

The overall aim of the materials for the MA in TEYL was to create a taught programme within a distance delivery structure. Within the writing, clear objectives were applied, in order to create step-by-step study materials which introduced and discussed module topic input, principles and applications in TEYL, and which students would follow alone.

The MA in TEYL syllabus and the eight modules were finalised and can be seen in Figure 4 below:

The methodology applied to writing and producing these materials was that the study approach in each module, excluding the final one, would be highly structured for these distance learners, in order to scaffold their learning and in order that the student did not have to try and structure all the learning for themselves.

The methodology used, and structure created for each module, was to split the module into 'Units' which represent one week of study, each covering 13-18 hours of work. The materials were written in such a way that the students could study separate aspects of the module as and when they needed, rather than the whole module at once. In particular, there was a need for these materials to be as flexible as possible, to fit around the life and work of the students.

The programme kept additional reading to a minimum so that study was contained within the module materials and a few core books. Because of this many articles, were incorporated into the study Modules. For variety the materials also include video materials and audio recordings.

In particular, the modules were designed to be cumulative and developmental, and students comment favourably on this.

The diagram in Figure 4 below shows the original structure of the MA in TEYL, as a two-year, part-time programme. Each year of study is twelve months duration with an intensive preparatory course at the beginning of each, Prep Course One or Prep Course Two (recently renamed Intensive Initial Preparatory Module and Intensive Mid-course Module).

The aim of Prep Course One is to prepare students for academic writing. The aim of Prep Course Two is to prepare students for carrying out action research projects.

Additionally, the aims of the eight modules, which students follow by distance, is to input discussion on eight different, but equally important aspects of TEYL. To consistently provide support, students interact with their supervisors regularly via email, phone or fax throughout their study.

Year One

<p>Preparatory Course One:</p> <p>Students attend a 10-day intensive programme before studying at a distance for the rest of the year</p>	<p>Module One Topic</p> <p>Understanding How Young Learners Learn, How Young Learners Learn Languages - a Historical Overview of ELT and TEYL</p>	<p>Module Two Topic</p> <p>An Overview of Approaches and Methods in ELT and Current Approaches to Teaching English to Young Learners</p>	<p>Module Three Topic</p> <p>Curriculum in Practice: Classroom Sequences and Procedures and Language Learning in the Classroom</p> <p>Classroom Investigation (CI)</p>	<p>Module Four Topic</p> <p>Assessing and Evaluating TEYL Teaching and Learning</p>
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Year Two

<p>Preparatory Course:</p> <p>Students attend a 10-day intensive programme before studying at a distance for the rest of the year</p>	<p>Module Five Topic</p> <p>Small and Large Scale Syllabus Design</p>	<p>Module Six Topic</p> <p>Teaching Materials – Evaluation, Assessment, Creation, Design and Application</p>	<p>Module Seven Topic</p> <p>Professional Development – the Roles of TEYL Professionals and Support Frameworks</p>
<p>Module Eight topic</p> <p>An Action Research Project (AR) carried out any time during the second year</p>			

Year Three

<p>Graduation and presentation at the International TEYL Research Seminar, followed by publication of the papers</p>
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Figure 4 A Diagrammatic Overview of the MA in TEYL

The methodology for writing these modules involved presenting collated theoretical input on, and interpretations and practical applications of, aspects of each topic, in a way which students would be able to understand, develop and use, at a distance.

This preparation took nearly two years. The task was large and a clear vision of what, why and how the students would interact with the materials throughout the programme was needed. All these materials were highly structured to support the distance learning.

The materials included text-based input, tasks for students to carry out and reflect on, video recordings of classroom teaching, extracts from publications, plus some recorded interviews with specialists, such as David Nunan, Jean Aitchison and Gordon Wells.

At every stage of the programme delivery, we ask for student feedback on the modules and input. Constructive student feedback has been informative and we have adapted the programme and materials following such feedback. We continue to gather this feedback and adapt materials annually.

3.3. Changes to the MA in TEYL Programme since 1997

There have been a great many changes to the programme since its launch in 1997, and as technology has allowed:

- In 1997 students were given hard copies of modules and VHS recordings for a whole study year and had to carry these back in their suitcases.
- By 2000 these were replaced by very portable DVD's and CD's.
- From 2007 we have used the University's virtual learning environment (VLE), Students, tutors, programme leaders and administrators can easily interact with each other on this VLE synchronously and asynchronously, Prep Courses can be delivered online and students can download all the module materials directly from the site. In addition, students have a virtual 'café' where they can 'meet' each other.

The relationship between the supervisors and the students on the programme is an extremely important and highly successful part of the MA in TEYL, as comments from the students and External Examiners annually testify.

Results for students are excellent and their feedback is often very moving. Students regularly mention how the programme has made them 'better teachers', or even changed their lives.

Three graduates of the programme have now been trained and mentored as Consultant Teaching Fellows and are tutors and supervisors on the programme themselves. Their experience as both student and tutor enables them to support and scaffold the students' development with great empathy and care.

3.4. Feedback on the MA in TEYL Programme

The External Examiners of the programme since 1997 have also been very complementary and supportive of all aspects of the MA in TEYL.

As one External Examiner, in 2003, wrote:

"The students all felt that the course had given them a great deal that would be useful in their professional positions. ... it had given them much on a personal basis, from meeting and working with (in a professional capacity) EYL teachers and managers from around the world, to learning how to time-manage and prioritise."

Another, in 2010, wrote:

"The course continues to offer an excellent opportunity for working teachers to further their professional and academic progress through a series of rigorously conducted studies firmly based in their own practice and teaching context."

In 2008-9 the programme came top in an independent international survey of distance EFL programmes delivered in UK, Australia and US, carried out by an EFL newspaper.

In 2009 the Programme won a prestigious University of York, Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Award, which rated the mentorship of the tutors on the programme as exceptional practice.

Student feedback is consistently positive. Over the years, many students have studied for the programme and their feedback has included comments similar to the following examples:

"I valued ... receiving 'care' even from a distance."

"I am confident I can apply almost all of what I studied in the real world."

"The fact that support is available when needed seems to exemplify and put into practice the concept of scaffolding in a very tangible way... theory is linked into practice at all levels."

"The reflective nature of the programme was very helpful ... with the process of critically thinking and the development of my own ideas."

"I really like the way that you are able to personalise your assignments."

"It was very well structured and each module led on one from the other."

3.5. The MA in TEYL within the SoTL linked to Kreber and Cranton's matrix model

To highlight the practical aspects of SoTL, Kreber and Cranton created a model to show the four functions in action, incorporating Instructional, Pedagogical and Curricular Knowledge as the three '*domains of : knowing about university teaching*' (Kreber & Cranton, 2000:481).

This model, seen below, also incorporates their understanding of:

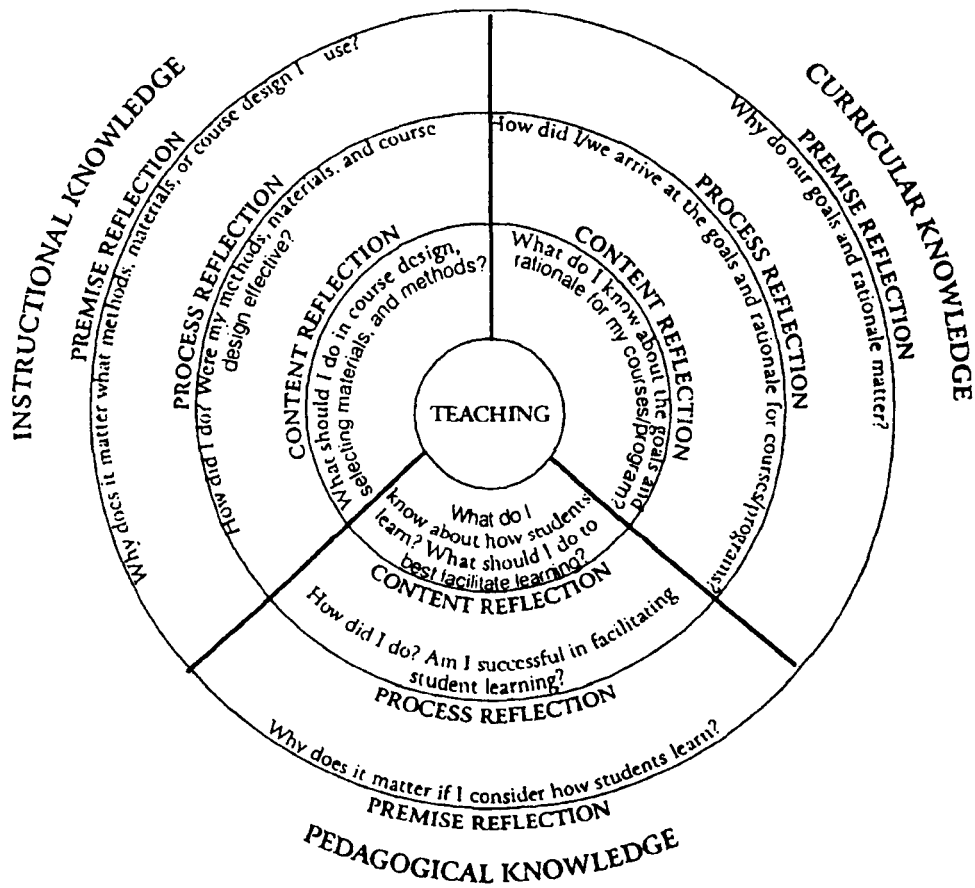
- i) Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, including his three levels of reflection; *content reflection* (description of the problem), *process reflection* (strategies and procedures for problem solving) and *premise reflection* (the merit and relevance of the question) and
- ii) Habermas' view of three types of learning about teaching i.e. instrumental, communicative and emancipatory.
(Mezirow and Habermas as cited by Kreber & Cranton 2000:478).

Their model highlights that "*Faculty who are acquiring instructional, pedagogical and curricular knowledge are engaging in one or more of these kinds of learning*" (Kreber & Cranton, 2000:484) and they note that:

"...scholarship of teaching includes both ongoing learning about teaching and the demonstration of teaching knowledge." (Kreber & Cranton,2000:478)

In their model, they show:

“...a 3 x 3 matrix representing nine components of the scholarship of teaching. Each of these can be characterized by some combination of instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory learning processes...” (Kreber & Cranton, 2000:484-5)



Instrumental and communicative learning: Process and content reflection on instructional and pedagogical knowledge.

Communicative learning: Process and content reflection on curricular knowledge.

Communicative and emancipatory learning: Premise reflection on curricular knowledge.

Instrumental, communicative and emancipatory learning: Premise reflection on instructional and pedagogical knowledge.

Figure 5 Kreber and Cranton’s model of the Scholarship of Teaching (Kreber & Cranton, 2000:485)

Kreber and Cranton’s model of the Scholarship of Teaching, has been incorporated into reflection on the MA in TEYL as shown (see Table 1 below).

	Pedagogical Knowledge	Instructional knowledge	Curricular knowledge
Content reflection	<p>Focus on student learning through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Scaffolding & mentoring *experiential learning *classroom investigation & action research *principles to practice *mentorship *reflective learning *linking of theory with practice <p>Allow students to access materials / study 24/7</p> <p>Students to be part of a community of practice</p> <p>students made aware of their multiple intelligences and learning styles & develop strategies for learning through these</p>	<p>Course design to encompass accessibility for students 24/7</p> <p>Study documents to be self-contained, clearly structured and timed</p> <p>All materials should be within the study documents or a few bought books</p> <p>Input and reflection linked to practice</p> <p>Students (and new tutors) scaffolded by mentors (tutors)</p>	<p>End-users asked what they want in programme</p> <p>Syllabus to balance workload over two years (part-time)</p> <p>Modules and Assignments cumulative & developmental</p> <p>Materials & learning outcomes meaningful for students during and after programme</p> <p>The study must link TEYL principles with practice</p> <p>Two successful external independent reviews carried out to check the 'balance' of the programme</p>
	Pedagogical Knowledge	Instructional Knowledge	Curricular Knowledge
Process reflection	<p>Student, tutor and programme team reflection at every stage of delivery</p> <p>Regular Feedback from students on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial preparation Each Module Each year of study Mid-course preparation End of programme <p>Regular feedback on Programme from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Examiners Students Assignments <p>Seminars: Graduate and TEYL specialist presentations</p> <p>Seminar papers – Graduate and TEYL specialists</p>	<p>Reflection by students, tutors and programme team at every stage of delivery</p> <p>Student success rates</p> <p>Student feedback on programme methods, materials, syllabus and course design</p> <p>External Examiner's reports</p> <p>Programme Awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Vice Chancellor's Award for whole programme team *Programme top in survey of international EFL MA's delivered by distance across US, NZ and UK 	<p>Feedback and input from possible end-users, enrolled students and graduates</p> <p>Reflection on what we, as tutors, would have wanted in such a programme at different stages of our careers</p> <p>Link student needs with experience and expertise to create a balanced, accessible, valuable programme with cyclical, cumulative and developmental input and learning stages throughout</p>

	Pedagogical Knowledge	Instructional knowledge	Curricular knowledge
Premise reflection	<p>Awareness of how mature students learn is necessary in order to create the right learning environment.</p> <p>Scaffolding of students' learning is important</p> <p>Students reflect on their own learning via learner journals</p> <p>Approach learners as colleagues not 'teachers'</p> <p>Listen to students' needs and address them via materials and approach</p>	<p>The course design, materials and methods should match the needs of the students</p> <p>Input must be accessible, meaningful and purposeful to them</p> <p>We want student success, not failure, so the better the methods, materials and course meets their needs the more likely this will be</p>	<p>It is important for the success of the students</p> <p>It is important for the success of the programme</p> <p>Job satisfaction!</p> <p>Success will mean input is valuable for students in the wider TEYL world</p> <p>The principles and methods of this programme may be used as a model by students in their own practice.</p>

Table 1. Kreber and Cranton's matrix of the Scholarship of Teaching with input on the MA in TEYL (adapted from Kreber & Cranton, 2000:485)

When considering the creation and delivery of the MA in TEYL, I believe this matrix shows clearly that a sound SoTL approach has been applied to all aspects of the programme.

Indeed, feedback from students show that 'cycles' of input, analysis, application and learning, or continuous reflective cycles, are taking place on three levels: for the MA in TEYL teaching team; the students; and sometimes for the young learners themselves.

This is illustrated in the diagram below (see Figure 6 below).

In addition, the programme is now delivered in Singapore and is soon to be delivered in Switzerland and Norway. Delivery of these Preparatory Courses, in-country, is often linked with TEYL conferences or seminars. There are also now two fully online cohorts each year.

I have noticed that many of the graduates use the approaches and methods they experienced on the programme in their own practice and with their young learners. I believe this is because the students were kept central to the teaching and learning focus in the MA in TEYL, they have learnt so much experientially, about themselves as learners, as members of the TEYL community of practice, and ultimately, as teachers.

It is therefore very gratifying to discover such a great link between the approach taken in the MA in TEYL and the SoTL principles, as they fit together well. I also believe we will be adding discussion of the SoTL to future versions of Modules 7!

4. The Scholarship of Discovery

Of the four functions, Boyer's *Scholarship of Discovery* was aligned most closely to traditionally viewed 'research'. However, he believed this scholarship should encompass '*not just the outcomes, but the process, and especially the passion...*' (Boyer, 1990:17) and that, at its best, it not only "*contributes ... to the stock of human knowledge but also to the intellectual climate of a college or university.*" (Ibid)

My work linked to the Scholarship of Discovery will be discussed here, particularly:

- A research project in which I surveyed the MA in TEYL student action research projects to find emerging patterns, problems and passions
- A recent research project surveying MA in TEYL students' action research reports looking for global patterns, problems and what professional development was noted within them
- Student gathered research within the MA in TEYL through action research formally presented, recorded and published by graduates

In this section of the Integrative Chapter I will be presenting these and illustrating the aims, objectives, methodology, results and conclusions for each.

It is important to explain how central the carrying out of action research is for the students on the MA in TEYL. Students use experience gained during classroom investigation research, in the first year, and build on this knowledge of data-collection, recording and interpreting data to inform their action research projects.

The reflective practitioner cycle is a central focus of this research aspect of the MA in TEYL and it informs the student decision making and overall approach to research. It also includes reflection from the MA in TEYL teaching team's research on action research projects, which further informs student decision making. This is a cyclical approach to research and learning carried out by everyone involved in the MA in TEYL, students and staff, which informs us all.

4.1. My practice in the Scholarship of Discovery linked directly with the student action research projects.

The aims of my own research on the MA TEYL student action research projects, 2004-2005, were to establish if there were any patterns, problems or passions emerging in the reports with the objective being to inform future students about these before they started their own action research project.

I surveyed 29 anonymous action research projects, and with the help of an assistant, looked for:

4.2. Research with MA in TEYL colleagues on action research reports

In a more recent piece of research with two MA in TEYL colleagues, Helen Marjan and Nicole Taylor, I surveyed some more action research projects. The aim of this research was to establish if any patterns were emerging, with the objective, again, of updating and informing future MA students for their action research projects.

We looked at 75 anonymous projects and each of us gathered data on different aspects of the projects. One looked at the impact of the action research on professional development, the MA in TEYL history and the general overview of TEYL globally; another looked at the problems that seemed to be emerging and the third looked at what data were gathered in the projects.

In particular we were looking for:

- global patterns that might be emerging
- student comments on professional development through action research
- patterns that might be emerging in:
 - the focus areas
 - the age group of learners
 - the number of cycles in the projects
 - the methods of data-collection
 - time spent on the action research
 - conclusiveness of results
 - problems occurring

In Hughes, A. Marjan, H. & Taylor, N. (2011b) 'Action research in TEYL: reflections on the global picture from 1996-2010' in Hasselgreen, A. Drew, I. and Sørheim, B. (Eds.) *Understanding the language Classroom: research-based insights into language teaching and learning in primary and lower secondary school*. Bergen, Norway : Fagbokforlaget , submitted here, we present this research and our findings:

'... to help enlighten a) future students b) academic staff c) programme writers and d) other academics and teachers' in the wider TEYL community of practice (Hughes, Marjan & Taylor 2011b)

In this chapter we also discuss the importance of action research for professional development. Our understanding is that the publication will be used by many of the other contributors in Norwegian university courses on TEYL and we will also use it on the MA in TEYL.

4.3. Student Involvement in Research and Graduate Presentations

I felt it was very important for MA in TEYL students to experience and carry out small-scale research throughout the programme. Therefore, classroom observation and action research projects were included in the programme.

My aims for including student research in the programme were to:

- i) introduce students to small-scale TEYL practitioner research
- ii) show how classroom TEYL research can be illuminative for teachers and
- iii) enable students to build on initial research experience.

My objectives being to introduce MA in TEYL students to data-gathering tools, allow them to experience research in action and show how classroom research can be valuable for TEYL practitioners.

The methodology for student research during the programme involved them carrying out individual classroom investigations in the first year, in which they focused on one aspect of language teaching, followed by a large action research project, also carried out in a TEYL classroom, during their second year.

Following on from these action research projects, additionally, and uniquely, graduates of the programme are invited to present their findings at an International TEYL Research Seminar alongside invited specialist TEYL speakers. All presentations are recorded and made directly available to other students on the MA. Additionally the presentations are published so that they can be shared with an even wider TEYL community of practice

5. The Scholarship of Integration

Boyer saw the *Scholarship of Integration* as the function in which scholars could:

“...give meaning to isolated facts, putting them in perspective....making connections across the disciplines...illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating non-specialists, too.” (Boyer, 1990:18)

He highlighted that this was: *“...serious, disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on original research”* (Boyer, 1990: 18 &19) because *“...it is through ‘connectedness’ that research ultimately is made authentic.”* (Ibid)

As Bender further discussed, this scholarship would bring *“new ideas into an expanding multidisciplinary repository of knowledge.”* (Bender, 2005:42)

For scholars, Boyer felt this function of the SoTL would mean:

“Interpretation, fitting one’s own research – or research of others – into larger intellectual patterns... Such efforts are increasingly essential since specialization, without broader perspective, risks pedantry.” (Boyer, 1990:19)

And as he further clarified:

“The distinction we are drawing here between “discovery” and “integration” can be best understood, perhaps, by the questions posed... Those engaged in integration ask, “What do the findings mean? Is it possible to interpret what’s been discovered in ways that provide a larger, more comprehensive understanding?” (Boyer, 1990:19)

Within the Scholarship of Integration sit several of my publications submitted with this Integrative Chapter. These are publications in which I interact with wider communities of practice in order to inform them about aspects of TEYL

5.1. The three-stage journey in TEYL

The first of these is Hughes, A. (2010b) *Supporting Independence: Teaching English to young learners within a three-stage learning journey* in ELT NEWS: The Greek Monthly Newspaper for EFL February 2010, Number 246 (Part 1) and March 2010, Number 247 (Part 2).

The aim of this article was to highlight, within a national TEYL community of practice, the young learner’s journey in their language learning and show teachers how to support this. I hoped the article, written for publication in a Greek EFL newspaper and published over two editions, would indirectly highlight that language learning for young learners should not only mean exams preparation but instead, activities and approaches which should be meaningful, purposeful and valuable for the learners.

In particular, my objective in the article was to describe the three-stage learner journey - Dependence, Supported Independence and Independence - in order to show how teachers can encourage, and allow, learners to move to a Supported Independent stage.. As I explain, I believe that within this stage, learning is more student-focused and more acquisition of language can take place, if the teaching allows it.

The article also illustrates, with practical examples, what the difference is between teaching at the Dependent stage and teaching at the Supported Independent stages. The article was written in the hope that it might give some local TEYL teachers, where a widespread traditional and exam-oriented teaching approach is used in TEYL, an opportunity to reflect on their own their own practice.

This article looked at the practical use of song and role-play in TEYL but did not focus on literacy or reading in TEYL. The next publication, however, focuses directly on literacy and the teaching of reading in TEYL.

5.2. The teaching of reading in TEYL

The next publication for submission is Hughes, A (2011a) 'Teaching reading in English as a foreign language to young learners: A global reflection' in Farstrup, A, E. & Samuels, J. S. (Eds.) *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction. Fourth Edition.* Delaware: International Reading Association

In this extensive chapter my aims were to introduce the global picture of TEYL to an audience that may only be teaching reading in an English environment; present a generalised and global view of TEYL; then, within this context, discuss and bring together some ideas from research on reading and research on reading in TEYL, in order to illustrate a global view of the teaching of reading in TEYL.

My objectives within the chapter were to present and discuss:

- The deficiency in our understanding of the teaching of reading in TEYL
- How and why young learners come to the language classroom
- A general global picture of, and the widespread variables in, TEYL
- How we believe young learners learn languages based on the theories of cognition and language learning known to us
- Why we should teach foreign languages to young learners
- Language learning as just another subject in the primary school
- The teaching of reading in TEYL
- Reading in the first versus second or foreign language
- Meaning or word level reading
- How we can create the right English learning environment
- The importance of story in TEYL

My discussion chapter particularly highlights when we feel learners acquire vocabulary and what levels of vocabulary are learned by our young language learners on a regular basis. It seems there may be a strong link between a large lexicon in a language and the ability to use the grammar of that language. Aitchison describes a 'critical mass' of 20,000 words for language fluency (Aitchison, 2003). However, a working lexicon of 2000 words is suggested by Cameron (Cameron 2001) while Rixon raises the complexity of words acquired as an issue in the teaching of reading, (Rixon, 2007).

In the chapter, I not only introduce research carried out by well-known EFL specialists but also include a few relevant action research findings from some of the MA in TEYL graduates, too. The chapter further introduces the need to make the language learning classroom a target-language literate environment for our learners.

One of my conclusions in the chapter is:

"...a balanced approach to the teaching of reading is necessary for our young learners, which specifically includes support for making meaning in their reading, a balanced approach to both phonics and whole-word approaches, and a need to create a rich target-language literacy environment, or data bank, for them in the language classroom"(Hughes, 2011a:343)

The chapter further concludes with some practical applications for:

- making the language classroom more target-language literate
- the importance of story in the teaching of language and reading and
- what we feel is going on in the learner's minds when they link stories with the language.

5.3. Action research for TEYL practitioners

The third title in this Scholarship moves to a completely different focus. Although it looks at action research for TEYL practitioners, it is not placed in the Scholarship of Discovery as the article is, in fact, an integration of findings on the action research and the suggestion to TEYL practitioners that action research is valuable for them. This an example of where the four functions overlap and interlink and the chapter could sit in either of the functions, it would seem.

In Hughes, A. (2012) 'The Use of Action Research in TEYL for Teacher Development and Professional Reflection' in Gardiner-Hyland, F. & Emery, H. (Eds.) *Contextualizing EFL for Young Learners: International Perspectives on Policy and Practice* UAE: TESOL Arabia, my aims were to de-mystify action research, show how valuable action research can be for TEYL practitioners and encourage more TEYL teachers to try action research themselves.

My objectives in this chapter were to:

- show how action research can be valuable professional development for TEYLers,
- present a step-by-step guide to carrying out action research which TEYL practitioners can follow
- show what action research might highlight about the learning that is taking place in the classrooms.

The guide is included not only to make action research more transparent but also to help any teachers wishing to trial action research for themselves, as there are too few publications that highlight how to carry out action research in TEYL.

In this chapter I also discuss how action research should be part of the TEYL practitioner's daily life, the sorts of action research that can be carried out, then show how action research is part of the MA in TEYL. I highlight some of the findings of action research projects carried out (Hughes, 2005) and Hughes, Marjan and Taylor (Hughes, Marjan & Taylor 2011b) and generally encourage the readers to try small-scale action research for themselves. I conclude by highlighting the professional development opportunities that come with such research.

6. The Scholarship of Application

Within the Scholarship of Application, I will show how my practice, including my publications and the creation of materials for the MA in TEYL, endeavours to share my own scholarship and understanding of TEYL to a wider community of practice and meet what Boyer saw as 'service'.

Boyer felt the *Scholarship of Application* was the 'application of knowledge' (Boyer, 1990: 19), not just for individuals and institutions, but particularly for the wider world through 'service' and that this service should be:

"...tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity. Such service is serious, demanding work, requiring the rigor – and the accountability – traditionally associated with research activities' because '...higher education must serve the interests of the larger community." (Boyer, 1990:19-22).

Linked to this need to offer service, is the drive to share and pass on my own knowledge and understanding of TEYL. As Shulman noted, about being a 'scholar':

"...a scholar is someone who is communal; she not only cannot but must not keep secrets. Scholarship entails a responsibility to 'pass it on', to exchange what you have learned, what you have found, what you have invented, what you have created with the other members of the community, assuming that they will do the same for you." (Shulman, 2002:41)

Within the Scholarship of Application, I see this 'service' as having more direct links with the young learners themselves, or the 'passing it on' in terms of suggested activities and approaches for their teachers. I will now outline examples of these below.

6.1. Using real stories and authentic books in TEYL

In Hughes, A. (2006) 'The all round use of real stories and authentic books in Teaching English to Young Learners' in *Reading is for Everyone: Publications of IATEFL Hungary Young Learner Special Interest Group* – Spring 2006 (pp 5-9) my aim was to illustrate how the use of real stories (those handed down from generation to generation and authentic books (created for native English speakers) can help develop not only specific target language learning and understanding, but also general learning, too.

My objectives in this were to introduce TEYL practitioners to the use of real stories and authentic books which support and develop their language learners' knowledge and use of English.

I do this by:

- discussing how exciting and special listening to or reading a story can be
- reminding the readers what is going on in our learners' heads as they listen to or read a story
- show how teachers can support learners through practical activities
- show how young language learners can be encouraged and supported to develop an understanding of many aspects of language through stories
- describe what learning in general the use of story in the language class can develop

I also support this discussion with two diagrams. The diagrams illustrate what is going on in our young learners' minds as they listen to or read a story, and which particular aspects of the language they are learning about, interacting with or observing.

The article sets out to encourage TEYL practitioners to

- i) use real stories and authentic books in the language classroom and
- ii) reflect on what happens when they use stories and books, and encourages them to make the most of activities for their learners.

This link to the use of practical activities which support language learning is also seen in the next publication.

6.2. Meaningful and Purposeful Language Learning Activities

Many of the same principles discussed above are highlighted in Hughes, A. (2010a) 'Why should we make activities for young language learners meaningful and purposeful?' in Mishan, F. And Chambers, A. (Eds.) *Perspectives on Language Learning Materials Development* Bern : Peter Lang.

The aim of this chapter was to show why meaningful and purposeful activities should be used in TEYL. The chapter brings together some aspects of my earlier work, from the 'Amazing Young Minds' Conference in Cambridge, a plenary presented at the APAC Conference in Barcelona, and some aspects of the initial Lessons of the online course In Hughes (Hughes, 2007).

My objectives, were to present my own interpretation of theory underpinning TEYL provision and link this understanding to the practical needs of the learner and teacher in the classroom. In the chapter I discuss how young learners learn, what factors help them acquire a foreign language, how they learn a foreign language, what the implications are for the TEYL environment and how we teach the target language.

In addition I outline the implications of this understanding for TEYL materials, activities and skills needed by the teacher and how this understanding can be applied in the TEYL classroom. I accompany this discussion with examples of practical activities to illustrate the points I make and link the discussion with the readers' everyday practice. Finally, I discuss assessment, evaluation and reflection in TEYL.

I conclude that young learners are very different from older language learners. Therefore they:

'...must be given a suitable learning environment, cognitively and linguistically appropriate tools, and a supportive and 'scaffolded' learning context in which to be successful.' (Hughes, 2010a:198)

6.3. Shrek – an example of a TEYL reader

Linked to the scaffolding of learners, in the final submission within the Scholarship of Application, Hughes, A. (2001c) *Shrek* London : Scholastic Ltd, I show how my links with TEYL practitioners on the MA in TEYL, and my work in discovery, application, integration and teaching of TEYL are brought together to create a series of readers. This publication is just one example.

I have worked with several publishers to create readers series for the young learner, including the Penguin Young Readers Series (Penguin ELT).

In this submitted publication I worked with the series editor to create the syllabus and headword list for the series. These would then be used by story adapters and writers.

The aim of this particular publication was to present the story of 'Shrek' at a level for a beginner of English using around 250 words with very simply grammar.

My objectives in writing such a series of readers are to a) encourage young English learners to read stories in English, b) show them that reading in English can be fun and c) it can link with their own experiences.

The methodology used in the writing of the series, the 'Popcorn' series, was to use popular films, which children enjoy watching, to support their interaction and enjoyment of English. The illustrations, taken directly from the movie stills, have been chosen to support the language.

The resulting readers are attractive, accessible, linked to learners' experiences and remind them of stories they know and love.

7. Conclusion

This Integrative Chapter, has shown how my practice, in the creation and running of the Masters in Teaching English to Young Learners (MA in TEYL) and in some of my publications over the last eight years, can be firmly placed within the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. It has shown how this practice is cyclical and each of the individual parts inform and extend the others. This practice is then passed on to the students and TEYL practitioners in my TEYL community of practice.

Additionally, the Integrative Chapter has shown how the MA in TEYL and my submitted publications fit into the SoTL model using Boyer's four functions: the Scholarship of Discovery, the Scholarship of Integration, the Scholarship of Application and the Scholarship of Teaching.

I have used Kreber and Cranton's matrix on the SoTL to illustrate how my professional writing informs the MA in TEYL, addresses each of the questions in this matrix, and further shows a good link with the SoTL.

In particular, I have shown how my practice and publications have emerged from the needs of those involved in TEYL.

As Bender discussed:

"Scholarship" ...could now define the entirety of ... work. Removing or weighting one piece of the interlocking design would deform the educational edifice. Building and exploring scholarly interconnections among its parts would benefit society by creating, integrating, applying, and transmitting skills and knowledge." (Bender, 2005:44)

And giving Boyer the last word in this Integrative Chapter, he rather delightfully said:

"In the end, inspired teaching keeps the flame of scholarship alive." (Boyer, 1990:24)

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Patterns, problems and passions in YL action research

Annie Hughes

There is a dearth of research into aspects of teaching English as a foreign language to young learners (TEYL) and so when designing the MA in TEYL, at the University of York, a module, and thus one assignment within the programme focuses on TEYL research. The eighth module of the programme involves students carrying out a piece of small-scale action research in a classroom situation with young English learners. The MA in TEYL has been in operation since 1997 and many of the students have said how valuable this action research project has been to them.

This paper will survey a sample of these MA action research projects. It will start, briefly, with a consideration of action research as part of professional development, and discuss some of the patterns, problems and passions that were found in the action research reports surveyed.

Large-scale and small-scale research

'Traditional' research, such as longitudinal studies of teaching in schools, or evaluation of individual methods within the classroom, can often take a great deal of time to carry out, much longer to analyse the findings and then even more time to get the findings out into the teaching community. These large research projects can also be very expensive and often involve academic researchers rather than classroom teachers. At a recent talk given by Margaret Brown of King's College, London, at the Department of Educational Studies, University of York she described some of the many research projects she has been involved in over the last 30 years. She has been particularly involved in looking at maths teaching in schools. Interestingly, she said that research can take a long time to make an impact in the classroom and that research she was involved in during the 70's was only now having impact on the teaching profession. This is really valuable research and the findings are seen as quite significant but this does seem like a very long time for research findings to percolate to the classroom teacher.

So, while large-scale research has a valuable and important role to play in education, it is also equally the case that small-scale classroom-based research is very important for the individual classroom teacher. It is smaller, cheaper, quicker and more immediate than larger-scaled research projects. It is this small-scale approach that the MA was hoping to introduce to the students on the programme, mostly practicing EYL teachers, managers, writers and trainers, so that it would inform their everyday practice.

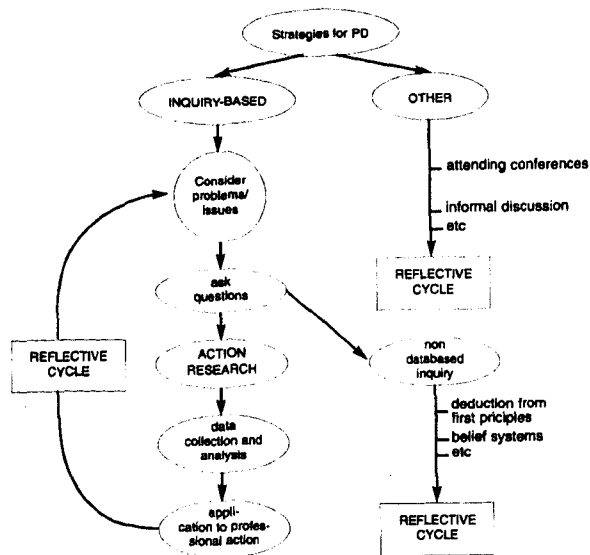
Research as professional development

The involvement of teachers in small-scale classroom research is a vital and important aspect of education practice and professional development and

understanding. It is in this role of professional development, particularly, that it was incorporated into the MA modules.

To look at the role of action research in the overall area of professional development it would be useful to look at Wallace's overview of professional development strategies (Wallace 1998: 44).

Why action research?



Professional development strategies (excluding 'conventional research')

You will see from this figure that the action research *reflective cycle* is seen as equally important to Wallace, in terms of professional development for practising professionals, as the other aspects of professional development outlined in his figure. It is also interesting to note that action research, or enquiry-based professional development, seems to be presented as a balancing aspect within professional development, to some extent. As Wallace says:

'Illuminative or heuristic research is much more feasible for practising professionals: gaining insights into one's own teaching or discovering something about oneself as a professional that one didn't know before is the very essence of action research'.

Wallace, M (1998: 44).

Bearing this in mind it is interesting to note what two of the MA in TEYL students also say about action research and professional development:

'Action research grows out of, and feeds back into, professional experiences. It seems clear that the teacher as researcher can be very powerful and effective in terms of facilitating change and developments in language teaching and learning in general. At the very least, however, each teacher can learn more about their own principles, beliefs and skills; about their own teaching contexts; and about their students' motivations, learning styles and needs.'

MA in TEYL student

'The capacity to be a reflective practitioner will enhance, but also benefit from, the processes of initiating one's own investigations. The results of these investigations then may become the basis for informed decisions about further professional action. The benefits of action research seem clear in terms of self-development and honing one's own understanding and teaching practice.'

MA in TEYL student

Reasons for practitioners to set up action research projects in EYL classrooms

There are plenty of reasons for practitioners to set up action research projects in EYL classrooms. Most importantly these are:

- To gain further understanding of how materials or activities are really working, or not working, with these learners;
- To gain further understanding of how young English learners are interacting with the teaching, activities or materials we use with them;
- To identify and attempt to correct a perceived classroom problem;
- To create, deliver and measure a new aspect of TEYL being used, whether it be different materials, methodology or resources;
- To fill the gap in the area of practitioner TEYL research;
- To facilitate a professional development reflective cycle, as illustrated by Wallace, above.

MA in TEYL students are encouraged to link with one of the above reasons or find their own for carrying out action research in their classroom. However, at the beginning of their decision-making process, we do encourage them to be realistic about what can be done in a piece of small-scale action research. We also encourage them to keep in mind two things that Margaret Brown also said in York which were that:

'On the whole, educational research doesn't have clear results'

and,

'People don't take up results of research if it doesn't ring true for them, be it a minister or a teacher.'

Survey of action research reports

In this next section we will take a closer look at a sample of action research reports that MA in TEYL students created in order to look for any patterns, problems and passions that emerged.

For this survey we looked at a random sample of 29 action research reports written between 1999 and 2003 (see Appendix for an example of some of the titles). We looked at a range of issues, (see below), and two people carried out the survey. We had a short window of time in which to carry out this survey.

According to Nunan the principle problems in action research are:

- Lack of time;
- Lack of expertise;
- Lack of ongoing support;
- Fear of being revealed as an incompetent teacher;
- Fear of producing a public account of their research for a wider (unknown) audience.'

Nunan, D (1993:44)

So we were expecting to see signs of all these problems as we read the reports. However, we set out to look particularly for patterns, problems, and passions. These were chosen as focus areas as we felt that findings could be passed to future action researchers, in the hope that these students could look out for and develop some of the ideas highlighted or avoid them altogether! Also we wanted to encourage the students to reflect on the experiences, good and bad, of the previous action researchers prior to carrying out their own action research.

What were our assumptions?

Some of these were the same as those pointed out by Nunan and included the following:

- We expected timing to be a problem for the action researchers;
- We expected technical problems to arise during the projects;
- We assumed that the focus areas would be very different from action research to action research;
- We expected there would be a wide range of data collection tools used;
- We assumed that there would be a wide range of different problems for each student;
- We expected that students would learn something from the action research even if the findings were not conclusive;
- We wanted to find out what proportion of projects were conclusive.

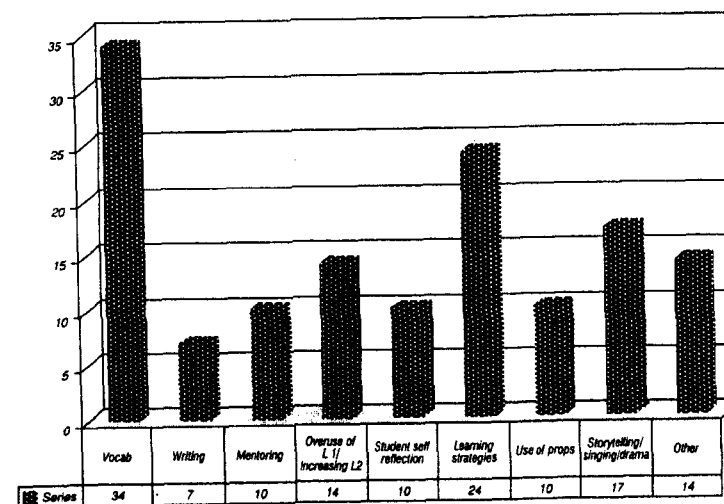
What did we look at?

We decided to look at the following aspects of the action research projects:

- The focus areas of each action research project;
- The key learning aims of the action research project;
- The number of cycles involved in each action research project;
- The methods of data collection used;
- The proportion of conclusive or inconclusive results;
- The time spent on each action research project;
- What researcher problems were encountered during each action research project;
- If any follow-on research was suggested by the action researcher.

What did we find?

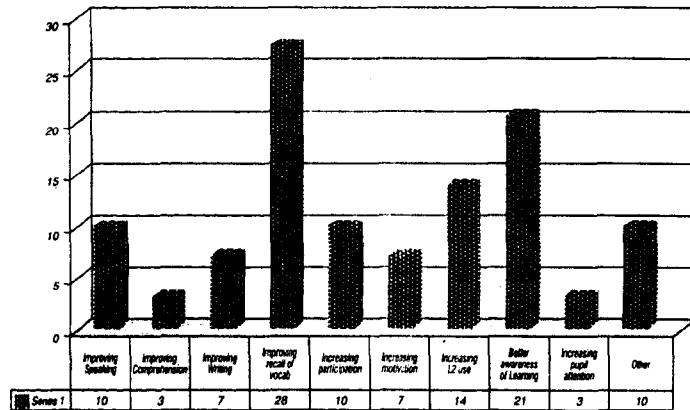
Graph 1: The focus areas of the action research projects



Vocabulary, at 34%, was the most popular focus area for action research. This could possibly be because researchers feel they can measure the learning of vocabulary more easily than other aspects of TEYL. *Learning Strategies* came second at 24%, with *Storytelling, Singing and Drama* coming in at 17%. Surprisingly, perhaps, *Overuse of L1/Increasing L2* was a close fourth.

Key learning aims of the action research projects

Graph 2: Key language learning aims of each action research project.

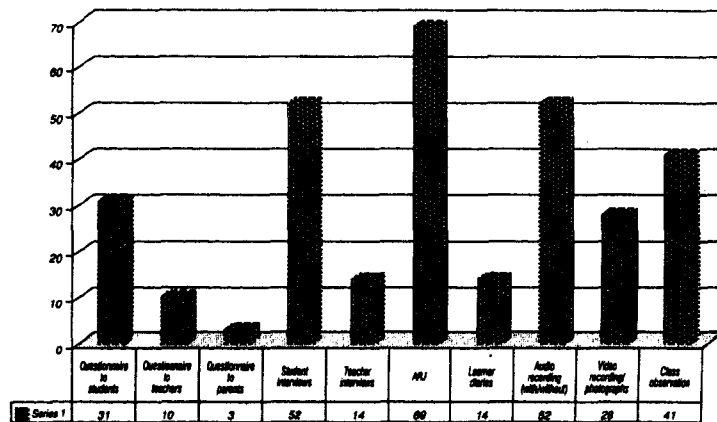


Not surprisingly after seeing the results of the focus areas, *Improving recall of vocabulary*, at 28%, was the most popular key learning aim within the action research projects. However, it is exciting to see that *Better awareness of learning strategies* comes in second with 21%. Again, linking back to the results in 1 above, *Increasing L2 use* is a close third, with 14%, and *increasing participation* closely following it at 10%.

Methods of data collection

We looked at the range of data collection methods across all the action research projects and found the following to be the case.

Graph 3: Data collection methods



Keeping an action research journal tipped the percentages at 68%. However, rather surprisingly, all the students were asked to keep an action research journal and so we would have expected the result for this to show 100%!

Student interviews and *audio recordings* were both popular methods of data collection at 50%, with *class observations* at a close 40%. *Questionnaires to students* were at 30% and *video recordings* at 27%. This latter result is rather a surprise as one would have expected audio and video recordings to be in the same percentage band.

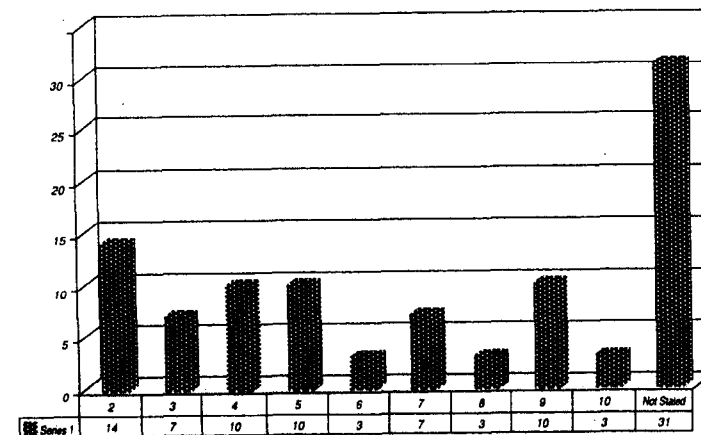
Conclusive versus inconclusive results

Interestingly only 41% of action research projects gave *conclusive* findings compared to 59% which showed *inconclusive* findings.

Time spent on the action research projects

We measured how long, according to the reports, researchers spent on their action research. Some of these results came as a bit of a surprise, too.

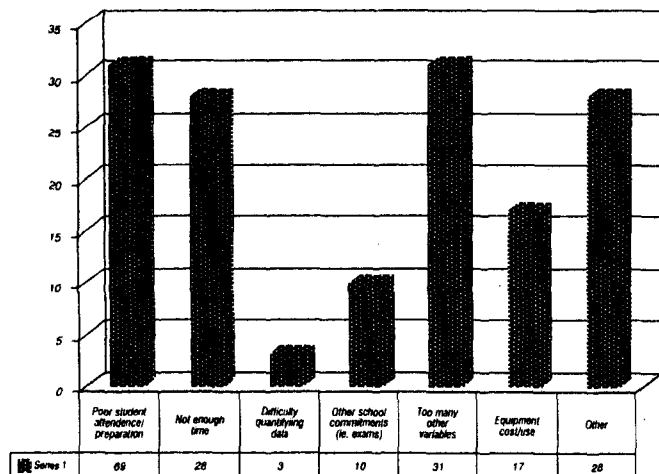
Graph 4: The time spent on action research projects.



The most popular length of time stated for carrying out the action research (though not the time for the analysis or the writing of the report) was *two months* at 13%, followed by *four, five and nine months* at 9%, *three months* at 6% and finally *six, eight and ten months* being 3%. Somewhat alarmingly, 30% of reports did not state how long had been spent on the action research!

What problems did the researchers encounter during their action research projects?

Graph 5: Problems encountered during action research projects.



Poor pupil attendance/ preparation/ behaviour accounted for 31% of the problems with *too many variables* also accounting for 31% of the problems encountered. A variety of 'other' that we were not able to categorise in our measurement accounted for 28% and included such problems as illness of the researcher, non-accessibility of class and a change of head in the school halting the research altogether.

Not enough time, as expected, did feature prominently and accounted for 28% of the problems encountered by the researchers with *problem with equipment, cost of the getting equipment and use of equipment* measuring 17% of the problems *Other school commitments* were a high 10%. Just one of the action researchers had difficulty in quantifying.

Was a follow-on action research suggested?

59% of students suggested that other students might want to carry out an action research that follows on from where their action research finished. This is a significant finding as no students have carried on an action research project from where a former student has finished. This will be an important message to future students.

What patterns were found?

The patterns in topics covered and learning aims showed that vocabulary and learning strategies were the most popular.

It appears that the action research journal, as could have been predicted, was a popular method of data collection, with student interviews and audio recordings also being very popular.

There seems to be a pattern emerging that there is more inconclusive than conclusive evidence found in action research projects to support what the researcher has set out to find.

Generally, 2 months was spent on the collection of data within the projects.

In the majority of cases a follow-on study was suggested by each student.

Which problems were predominant?

The following were identified as problems that arose within the action research project and this, in particular, should help future action researchers to avoid them.

- Not enough time or the action research that was designed or was too big for the time scale involved;
- Piloting often not carried out first to clarify many aspects of the action research project;
- The integration of data-gathering instruments (videoing/ audio recording/ pupil journals/ interviews/ questionnaires) into classroom routines. It was suggested by many students that this is done before the action research starts so that pupils become accustomed to their presence;
- Not enough follow-on from other research projects;
- No clear question at the beginning of the action research project.

What passions were discovered?

Surprisingly, over and over again we found that the researchers had become quite passionate about the use of the action research itself and particularly in terms of the professional reflection they were involved in. This bears out exactly what was illustrated in the Wallace figure earlier in this paper.

One of our students noted:

'The process of carrying out an action research project in its entirety provided an opportunity for the teacher/researcher not only to observe the young learners in the classroom, but to reflect upon and analyse her own beliefs and these would seem to be its principal benefits. The information gained from the ARP will enable changes to be made which may improve the ESL programme for the young learners, but the deeper understanding of the learning process, and language learning in particular, gained by the teacher/researcher could be considered as an inestimable step in her own professional development.'

MA in TEYL student

And, fascinatingly, the following student did not seem to be that bothered about their results when asked to reflect on the action research itself:

'The issue of whether the investigation was a success or not could be argued to be a moot point. From the outset this investigation was termed action research and had the objective, not of creating "new scientific knowledge", but of improving the teacher's knowledge and understanding of his teaching, the classes and the context in which they occur. From a participant's point of view it could be said that this investigation did increase the teachers' knowledge of the 'workings' of the classes. That more questions or issues were raised than answered might not be a criticism of the project as much as reflection of the complexity of the teaching and learning act.'

MA in TEYL student

Another student remarked:

'Action research may be seen as a form of illuminative research as it is concerned with practitioners' work in a particular context, rather than the establishment of universal truths. As such, it may serve as a useful tool for educational practitioners who seek to solve problems, reflect on their practice, and adopt a proactive approach to professional development.'

MA in TEYL student

What recommendations will we now make to students about to carry out an action research project?:

- Start earlier than they intend;
- Carry out a pilot before the action research to iron out any problems with the data gathering tools;
- Get the technical equipment organised in advance and use it in the class before the action research project to allow the children to get used to it;
- Look at previous research studies in detail and consider developing one of these further;
- Don't worry if the results are not conclusive.

Student Reflections at the end of the programme

When reflecting on the whole programme five students said the following about the action research aspect of the study during the MA in TEYL:

'I learned to handle an overwhelming amount of data. In the end, I was surprised by the results, and partly changed my teaching practice.'

'Very time-consuming, difficult to manage but highly encouraging, opening prospects on further research, pointing beyond the MA.'

'...a perfect way to finish the MA in TEYL. This proved to be daunting in some aspects in that one had to really rely upon one's self. However, it also proved to be very challenging and rewarding in that it really got one involved in the whole process of action research in addition to yielding some very interesting results.'

'Invaluable! Teacher reflecting and taking responsibility for their own classroom practices.'

'... it has to be noted that although the results of the Action Research have proved generally inconclusive, the process itself has been a fruitful one to the researcher as it has pointed the way to other ways of concern such as the possibilities of carrying out learner training in English.'

Finally, it would seem that the following student has summed up that the patterns, problems and passions of carrying out action research are worth it:

'It would seem that although research might prove to be uncomfortable at times, the gains that may occur in terms of personal and professional growth and positive change could be said to outweigh the possible negative aspects of research.'

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Appendix**Some MA in TEYL Action Research Project Titles**

- Will the reading of storybooks by the teacher of the class in which the study is taking place, influence the borrowing of storybooks on the part of students?
- Does the use of new recording formats for vocabulary (when vocabulary items are recorded with relevant co-texts and highlighted) improve learner's ability to place those items in a meaningful context?
- An investigation into the extent to which two young learners actively participate in English in teacher selected and student selected groupings, and the extent to which this is reflected in students and teacher perceptions.
- The effect of extra-linguistic support and the use of the mother tongue on the comprehension of a story by 10 year old Japanese learners of English.
- An investigation of the over use of L1 in a monolingual group of elementary level 12 year old learners of English as a Foreign Language.
- The complementarity of teacher interaction and the use of multimedia in storytelling, with 6-11 year olds.

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Hughes, A. (2006) 'The all round use of real stories and authentic books in Teaching English to Young Learners' in *Reading is for Everyone: Publications of IATEFL Hungary Young Learner Special Interest Group – Spring 2006* (pp 5-9)

Annie Hughes:

The All-round Use of Real Stories and Authentic Books in Teaching English to Young Learners



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Introduction

In this article I am hoping to illustrate that the use of real stories and authentic books, when teaching English to young learners, can help develop not only specific target language understanding, but also general all-round learning. By *real stories* I mean stories that have been handed down from generation to generation and known to lots by many, such as traditional Fairy Tales, often heard in translation. By *authentic books* I mean those books that have been written and published for young people as real stories, in English, though which have not been designed as language resources for the English classroom. In *Teaching English to young learners*, there is a place for graded readers (Hughes & Williams 2000) and specifically written language stories but I am not going to be focusing on those in this article.

So, first let us think about what happens when we tell a child, or a group of children, a good story. Can you visualise the looks on their face/s when they hear a story told well? Often they are completely 'wrapped up', cognitively and imaginatively, in that story, while the physical and actual place they are in has, in a way, disappeared for them, as they are transported to the pictures and action of the story they are hearing or reading. Martin, Lovat and Purnell (2004: 49) also describe this when they say:

At the really dramatic moments children's concentration can almost be felt in the room as their eyes stare at us and their breath is held...The appeal is basic. ... How do we ensure that all children experience the power of story....? How do we then best utilise this power as a way into children learning ...?

It is this aspect of language and general learning for our young English language learners I aim to discuss here.

What about you? Can you remember that 'wrapped up in the story' feeling at all? It is very special. Try to remember it and then try and describe it? What are its component parts? They seem to be very difficult to clarify but we could have a list which includes intense concentration, focus on one thing, intense listening, intense mental processing of information we are receiving from ears and eyes, making links with physical, linguistic, verbal and visual clues that we are getting to make sense of the story and so it could continue.

Actually, the feeling described above, of being totally 'wrapped up' in a story is not just the preserve of those still in childhood. Working with teachers in professional development courses I still see that look when adults allow themselves to get 'wrapped up' in good stories that they are being told or reading. I also really enjoy being a listener myself and going into that 'state' of listening to a good story. I think it might be difficult for some adults, though, to let themselves go into this highly enjoyable state....perhaps we are too grown-up to let it happen? However, the story has to be told well for the reader or listener to get totally and successfully 'wrapped up' in it. Interestingly, after the story has been told or read there is often a reported sense of the participants having been involved in some sort of meditation...though this aspect of story listening and reading needs further research in the future and not what I am going to spend time discussing here!

Let's think about the stories, themselves, the 'powerful stories' that Martin, Lovat & Purnell (2004) mention, that can then be used to teach a whole range of things and particularly, in this case, language.

Real stories and authentic books have been written for real listeners and readers. They are written, edited and honed carefully by a skilled story craftsperson and the story structure,

language used and story development follow a carefully constructed shape. In English teaching these real stories and authentic books can be just as powerful and informative as they are in the mother tongue, even though they may need a more supportive approach to aid their full understanding so as to unleash their power, perhaps more of a marked approach to scaffolding, in the Brunerian sense, than, perhaps, mother tongue speakers would need (Bruner 1986).

Because of the language learners' understanding of listening to or reading stories in mother tongue, young English learners will be comfortable using the same cognitive tools to process the story as they do in the mother tongue, though they will probably be doing this unconsciously.

As listed above, these would include such things as intense concentration, focus on one thing, intense listening, intense mental processing of information we are receiving from ears and eyes, making links with physical, linguistic, verbal and visual clues that we are getting to make sense of the story. We are then, in the target language, using and extending these skills in a variety of ways to also support language learning as well as learning in general.

We are encouraging these young learners to listen to, or read the story, while processing the information they are receiving, interpreting, relating to, imagining, considering and thinking about this plus a wide variety of different aspects of the story. As Latham points out:

The ability to listen to and comprehend stories, and to reproduce or produce them, does have a facilitative effect on cognitive processes, and upon personal development, too...[T]he understanding of narrative involves very complex mental activity, and children who engage in listening to or reading stories on a wide scale are greatly enlarging their strategies for grasping meaning, their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and their imaginations. (Latham 2002)

It is this opportunity to give our young language learners the opportunity to engage in story listening and reading and to enable them to enlarge their strategies for grasping meaning, their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and their imagination that I will outline here.

Engaging in story listening and reading

What is going on our learner's heads when they are listening to or reading a story in English? The short answer is ... a lot! It would seem that they are trying to do a multitude of the following things and more:

- listening to, following and enjoying the story,
- understanding the key language being used and concepts associated with them,
- linking the language to the pictures or the gestures of the storyteller,
- linking the language to the actions in the story or those of the storyteller,
- using the pictures, or gestures of the storyteller, as support for language comprehension within the story,
- following the story structure i.e. being aware of and listening for the beginning, middle and end of the story,
- listening/looking for story markers e.g. 'then', 'so' 'finally', 'and 'happily ever after',

- listening/looking for the story stages (similar to the staging posts suggested by Garvie 1990),
- mentally visualizing the story, and things in the story,
- making sense of new things e.g. the gestures the storyteller is using / pictures of things they have not seen before / styles of illustration they have not seen before / key words they have not heard or seen before,
- using the context of the story to understand the gist of that part of the story.

How can teachers support these learners?

So how can the teacher support all of this? As there is so much going on in their heads we must particularly allow learners plenty of 'thinking time' and not rush any story that we deliver. We must leave plenty of regular gaps during the telling of a story so that the learners can use the time for all the mental activity mentioned above.

We must support the understanding of the story and the key vocabulary/ phrases. And we must do this in a number of ways, so that we reach all sorts of learner and intelligence types within the class (Gardner 1983) by using techniques such as over-emphasized intonation, mime, gestures, props, dramatic voices, visuals and texts, to present the story and make it as clear and engaging as possible for each learner. We can also use realia, such as hats for *The Hatmaker and the Monkeys* (Garvie 1990) story or a turnip to use in *The Enormous Turnip* (traditional) or some different foods to support *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle 1970) as well as pictures and pages from the books.

We need to know the stories inside out before presenting them, so that, if we are interrupted by questions or remarks from the learners when telling the story, we can resume comfortably and not break the mood created by the story. We must also remember to maintain eye contact with all the children as we tell the story so that they feel this is for them as individuals as well as their class.

We must give lots of examples of stories in different forms in the language class, from small authentic books, to pictures of stories, props from a story, to big class books. If you are using a big book remember to follow the text with your finger if your English learners are also early on in the reading process, in the mother tongue, as this will help them with general reading, too. This also gives a clear model to follow if the mother tongue has a different script or direction of script.

Our objective is that after much input, in terms of stories and activities linked to stories, we can encourage the learners to tell stories or write stories using the techniques we have modelled, such as special use of intonation, story markers and key words.

It is just this reference to the initial input, that the language teacher generally hopes to hear when the young learners try to tell a story they have heard, or use phrases from a story they have heard, within the "tell back", as Bruner describes it (Bruner 1986).

- When it comes to the children telling or writing stories they can do so individually or in groups by
- Dramatizing the story in the same way that the teacher told it, using her techniques.

- Dramatizing the roles of key characters from the story.
- Miming parts of the story as individual characters.
- Re-telling the story they have heard in verbal or written form.
- Telling the story with pictures to support each stage of the story.
- Drawing pictures to describe each stage of the story.
- Dramatizing the beginning, middle or end of a story.
- Working in groups where one person is the narrator, joining the action together with descriptions and story markers, while the others are characters from the story that use dialogue to deliver each of their parts of the story.
- Creating and using story markers and key words and phrases to write a story.

Developing from this, children can also be involved in a wide variety of language extension activities that link to the stories in the language class, including:

- Telling the story as a TV news item or writing the newspaper headline for the story.
- Playing a *Who am I?* game: pupil describes character from story and others guess.
- Writing a sentence from a story and their partner / class/ group guesses the story (this is useful with well-known stories such as fairy tales).
- Turning a story into a play or musical for parents or other classes.
- Dramatising the story in small groups in class.
- Changing the ending of well-known stories and writing the new story.
- Imagining what happens next to one character from a story.
- Creating a picture gallery of popular characters from stories.

Eddie Garvie (1990) describes story as the vehicle for language learning and concept formation but stories can also be used as a valuable and rich resource as the language learning syllabus itself. It is possible, with very careful choice of real stories and authentic books, that the use of stories in the language classroom can be used as the main framework for carrying all the language that the teacher, school, region or ministry believe should be taught to young English language learners at each particular stage – or the syllabus.

The syllabus could be drawn up and real stories and authentic books and stories gathered that incorporate the language to be taught throughout the year. This would, as with all syllabus design, call for very detailed and careful planning but could enrich the use of the story in the language classroom so that it was not only a successful vehicle to use for teaching language to the younger learner but also become the framework of the language syllabus itself. The use of stories as a teaching syllabus can also create a wonderful arena in which to develop a cross-curricular approach to language, and learning in general, starting with the story and then dealing with other curriculum areas that link with the story, such as history, song, art and craft, drama, science, maths, geography, and information technology.

Young Language learners are encouraged and supported to develop an understanding of many aspects of language through stories

By using real stories and authentic storybooks in the language classroom we can create a rich and supportive environment for our learners in which they develop their understanding of a range

of language. This can be vocabulary, ranging from the simple everyday words such as 'leaf' to the more specialised such as 'cocoon' via the contextualisation of this language within a story (Carle 1970). This is also the case with language chunks and phrases e.g. 'see you tomorrow', 'And so', 'Once upon a time', 'he was still hungry', 'too big' and so on.

Through story, language learners also start to develop their understanding of different aspects of language such as story markers and key words to describe the action of the story and are able to develop their own understanding of parts of language that are needed to tell a story such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, connectors and contractions. They can also develop their understanding of devices such as repetition, and the use of dialogues, narrative, and onomatopoeic words contained in a story and the importance of predicting what is coming next when you are listening or reading.

All these help them in general, and in the target language in particular, when it comes to reading and writing; creating stories; using dialogues and narrative and thinking overall about a framework that can be used for writing a story. This way, children can be introduced to process writing under the guise of *writing a story* and then *getting the story right* rather than just a need to get all their writing *correct* or an approach that encourages them to think that writing is difficult and they will not be successful.

Indirectly, too, the use of real stories and authentic story books will help children to develop their understanding of the importance of illustration to support a text, the role of drama when reading or writing stories, and the need to think about speed of delivery when saying something out loud, so that the listeners can process what you are saying.

Using story in language classes develops learning in general

The use of story in the language classroom develops the learners' strategies for extending and gaining deeper understanding in a number of general areas of learning, too. Carefully chosen stories can aid and enrich their general knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

This can be done through stories that cover a range of topics and deal with a variety of issues, from ecology to social events, looking at people in history to current affairs and all manner of scientific or biological situations that occur around us all the time, like metamorphosis, how the galaxy was formed, how animals are born, where countries in the world are situated and so on. Learners can be introduced to different cultures through these stories, too, and acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in a social context can be modelled within the stories.

It is easy, though, when looking at how stories can help children develop knowledge in general, to forget that the use of real stories and authentic books can encourage a great deal of imagination in our learners that will aid them, not only in describing situations and places, but also help them relate to and understand emotional situations and differences between people.

So, it seems that real stories and authentic books can be a vehicle for both language learning and all round knowledge development. The following two figures aim to summarise this.

Figure 1

See the adult or storyteller:

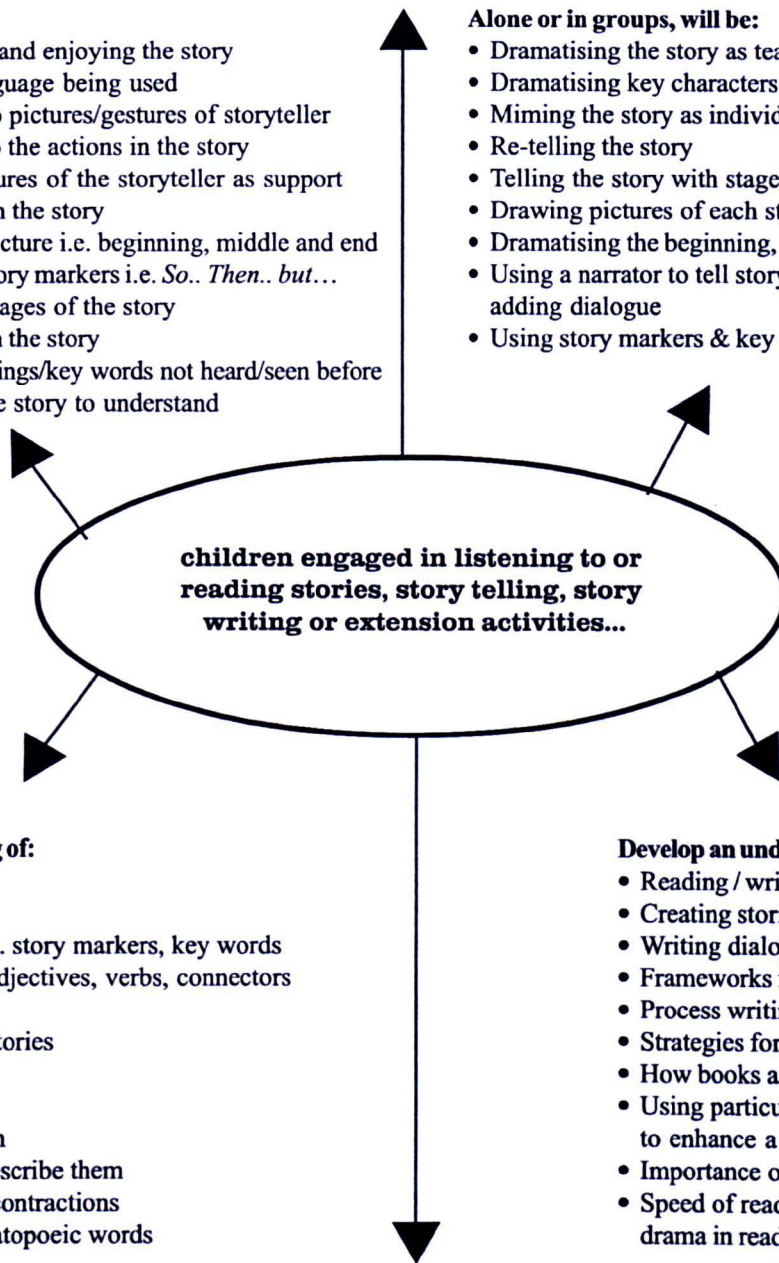
- dramatise stories with gestures and intonation,
- read out slowly and dramatically,
- tell the story using step by step pictures,
- tell the story by reading from and showing the pages of the book,
- tell the story using puppets,
- deliver the story through DVD, CD audio recording or via PC software.

Will be:

- Listening to, following and enjoying the story
- Understanding key language being used
- Linking the language to pictures/gestures of storyteller
- Linking the language to the actions in the story
- Using the pictures/gestures of the storyteller as support for new language within the story
- Following the story structure i.e. beginning, middle and end
- Listening/looking for story markers i.e. *So.. Then.. but...*
- Listening/looking for stages of the story
- Visualizing the action in the story
- Making sense of new things/key words not heard/seen before
- Using the context of the story to understand the new language

Alone or in groups, will be:

- Dramatising the story as teacher told it
- Dramatising key characters parts
- Miming the story as individual characters
- Re-telling the story
- Telling the story with staged pictures
- Drawing pictures of each stage of the story
- Dramatising the beginning, middle and end
- Using a narrator to tell story with children as characters adding dialogue
- Using story markers & key words to write story



Develop an understanding of:

- Vocabulary
- Language chunks
- Aspects of language e.g. story markers, key words
- Parts of language e.g. adjectives, verbs, connectors
- Sounds and letters
- Visual presentation of stories
- Use of repetition
- Dialogues and narrative
- Importance of prediction
- Emotions and how to describe them
- When and how to use contractions
- Use and value of onomatopoeic words

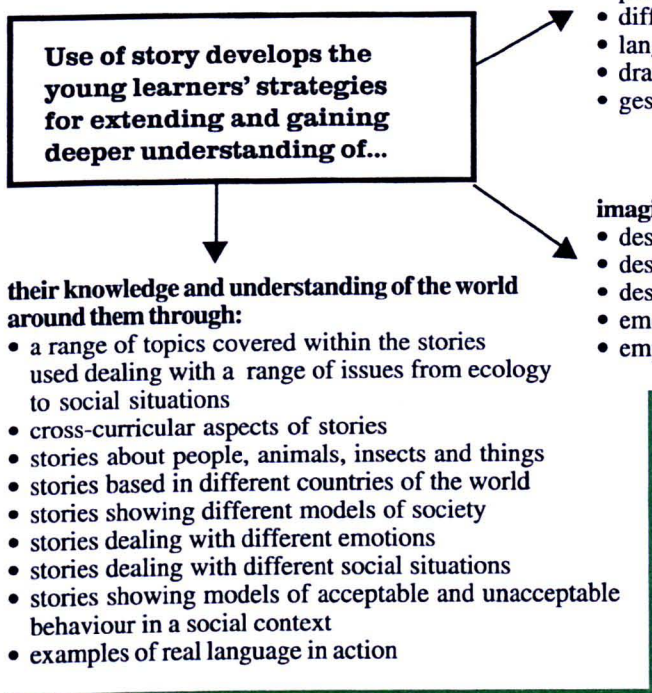
Develop an understanding of:

- Reading / writing
- Creating stories with b/m/e
- Writing dialogues and narrative
- Frameworks for writing a story
- Process writing
- Strategies for reading/writing
- How books are written and made
- Using particular language to enhance a story
- Importance of using illustrations
- Speed of reading for an audience drama in reading/ writing of stories

Can extend their story activities, such as:

- Telling the story as today's t.v. news or writing the newspaper headline
- Playing *Who am I?* game: pupil describes character from story
- Writing a sentence from a story and partner / class/ group guess the story (useful with well-known stories such as fairy tales)
- Turning a story into a play for parents/ other classes
- Dramatising the story in small groups in class
- Changing the ending of well-known stories and write the new story
- Imagining what might happen next to a character from story
- Creating a picture gallery of popular characters from stories

Figure 2



meaning through:

- pictures supporting concepts within each story
- different contexts shown in each story
- language use and 'chunks' within stories
- dramatised action within stories
- gestures and actions of storyteller

imagination through:

- descriptions of people and things within the stories
- descriptions of smells, tastes, emotions and actions within each story
- descriptions of people, animals and things within each story
- emotions evoked through characters within each story
- empathy with the main characters within a story

their knowledge and understanding of the world around them through:

- a range of topics covered within the stories used dealing with a range of issues from ecology to social situations
- cross-curricular aspects of stories
- stories about people, animals, insects and things
- stories based in different countries of the world
- stories showing different models of society
- stories dealing with different emotions
- stories dealing with different social situations
- stories showing models of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in a social context
- examples of real language in action

- Are the language structures in the real story or authentic book clearly supported by the illustrations?
- Is it an attractive and exciting real story or authentic book?
- Is it a good dramatic story or authentic book?
- Does the story flow easily?
- Is there a clear context for this story?

(Adapted from Hughes 2006)

If you can answer most of the questions above in the affirmative with a real story or authentic book then it would seem this will be a good one for the young English language learner classroom and should be used and enjoyed by everyone – teacher and learners!

Annie Hughes

University of York, 2006

How, then, can teachers choose the most suitable real stories and authentic books to use with young English language learners so that they are vehicles for both language learning and all round knowledge development? It is helpful to devise and use a checklist, such as the one below, to help one choose, as not all real stories and authentic books are ideal for the young learner English language class:

Checklist for choosing real stories and authentic books for use in the young learner English language class

- Is the level suitable for the particular class, linguistically, cognitively and topically?
- Is the topic within the real story or authentic book suitable for this group of learners when considering their age, cognitive level, linguistic level and cultural needs?
- Can you use or create some meaningful and purposeful cross-curricular activities to accompany this real story or authentic book?
- Does this real story or authentic book story create a good verbal or written model for children to follow?
- Does the real story or authentic book use plenty of good story-telling techniques and signposts for the listener or reader (e.g. story markers and a clear beginning, middle and end)?
- Will this real story or authentic book be a good model for children to use in creating another similar story?
- Is there lots of repetition of language phrases and vocabulary in the real story or authentic book?
- Does the real story or authentic book clearly illustrate emotions and feelings for the learners to relate to?
- Are there opportunities for prediction on the part of the listener/ reader which will aid the language comprehension?
- Do the illustrations clearly support the language?
- Is the text clear to read and clearly set out on the page?
- Are the pages uncluttered and easy to see?
- Does the story lend itself to involvement and participation on the part of the listeners or readers?
- Is it clear what the learners should be looking at in all illustrations used?

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Why should we make activities for young language learners meaningful and purposeful?

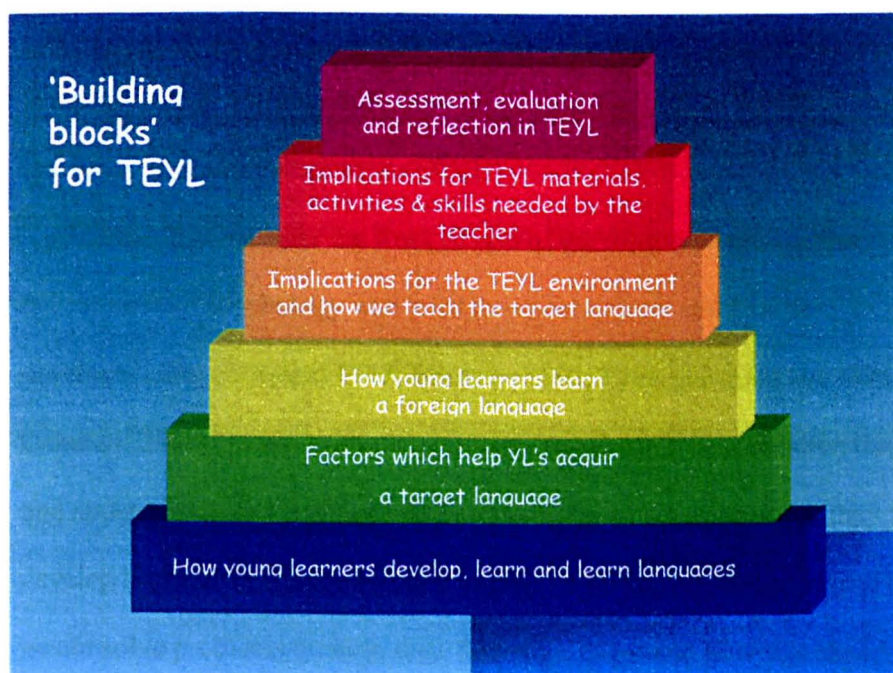
Annie Hughes

To answer the question posed in the title of this chapter, we need first and foremost to understand how children think and learn, how they learn language, then, how they learn a foreign language. After keeping these in mind we can then address the most suitable approach for teaching English to young learners (TEYL). When teaching English to young learners we need to remember that we must provide activities that will encourage and support the teaching and learning of the target language as well as general cognition and development. If we do this it will ultimately lead to more motivating classes for our learners and for us as teachers!

In this chapter, then, I will first attempt to highlight specific pedagogical principles that should always be taken into account before, and as, we teach English to young language learners. These are seen as the 'Building Blocks for TEYL'. Each will be introduced and discussed before going on to a discussion of meaningful and purposeful activities in TEYL. This is intended to illustrate that the links between all these blocks are, and should always be, inseparable and they must all be kept in mind by those of us involved in any aspect of TEYL, whether teacher, parent, materials creator, publisher or head of school.

A diagram of these 'Building Blocks for TEYL' is shown below, with the first being the largest, foundation block at the bottom of the tower which supports and underpins the rest of the building blocks of TEYL.

Figure 1: Building blocks for TEYL



Starting with *how young learners develop, learn and learn languages* as the foundation block, the next block up is *factors which help YLs acquire a target language* and then, as the blocks continue to get higher, so does our understanding of TEYL. The next block is *how young learners learn a foreign language* followed by *implications for the TEYL environment and how we teach the target language*. Following on from these are *implications for TEYL materials, activities and skills needed by the teacher* and, last but not at all least, *assessment, evaluation and reflection in TEYL*.

We need to be aware of and understand all these 'Building Blocks of TEYL' whenever we think about any aspect of TEYL and how we can best support young foreign language learners. Without all these 'building blocks of TEYL' understanding in place, our provision for young English learners would be uninformed and inadequate. Each of these blocks will now be considered in turn.

How young learners develop, learn and learn languages

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to consider all the research on children's learning, or their learning of foreign languages. Instead we will focus on one or two that have particular relevance to TEYL.

For the first, we refer the work of one of the most well-known theorists in developmental psychology who tried to work out how children thought and mentally developed. Piaget (Piaget 1967; Brewster 1991; Brewster, Ellis and Girard 2002; Cameron 2001) set up various experiments to ascertain how children thought, during, and about, different situations and in order to try to determine how they were able to develop cognitively. In particular, it seems, he was trying to understand how children would solve problems through their life experiences and how this changed as they got older. His assumption was that children actively constructed knowledge from experience and so he set out to find out how the child did this as a 'lone scientist'.

Based on the results from his work Piaget was of the opinion that children developed through specific stages. These specific stages, he believed, were the 'Sensori motor stage', from 0-18 months, in which the child was learning through interaction with the world around it, with the child being particularly ego-centric at this stage. The next stage was the 'Concrete operational stage', from 18 months -11 years, split into two subsets of pre-operational and concrete operational stages, in which he felt the child developed and was able to operate through interaction with the concrete world around them. Then, Piaget believed, the child was able to move to more abstract thought within the final stage, the 'Formal operational stage' (Brewster 1991; Cameron 2001). His work particularly tried to identify how the child could *assimilate*, (i.e. add new knowledge to support knowledge already understood by

them) and *accommodate* (change their present understanding of something based on new experiences they have) new experiences and, thus, develop their understanding further using both.

Piaget inflexibly believed these three stages were more or less fixed in age and sequential order. He also believed that children could only move onto the next stage when they had completed the stage before and were thus 'ready' to move on to the next stage.

Following this highly influential work, a lot of children's teaching, of all subjects, tried to link with these findings and base teaching on the 'readiness' of children to move onto the 'next stage' in their development. The familiarity of concepts such as 'reading readiness' is testimony to the influence Piaget's work has had on the teaching of young learners over the last forty or so years. (Brewster 1991; Cameron 2001).

However, through the work of Margaret Donaldson (1978) many of Piaget's experiments were re-created and she found that his measurements did not truly reflect the way children were able to think and make sense of their experiences. She discovered that Piaget did not, for example, take into account what sense the child was making of the adult questioning in the sorts of 'experiments' he carried out. She also felt that Piaget took no account of the fact that the 'experiment' was taking place in a very unnatural and unusual setting for a child and these unnatural settings would give the child a whole host of new things to try and make sense of, rather than just the one that Piaget was trying to focus on (Cameron 2001).

Piaget's work has also come under quite heavy criticism in general because, rather crucially we would now feel, he did not consider the role of language as an important catalyst in the cognitive development of the child. His work, however, has been very

important in the field of TEYL, and though it is no longer as influential in terms of our thinking about children's cognitive development, Piaget was one of the first to seriously try to establish exactly what was going on in the child's head and, perhaps more importantly, to consider the child as an individual, a 'lone scientist', who was developing and thinking as an individual. Piaget's work was thus very important as a first step in gaining a contemporary understanding of the cognitive development of children.

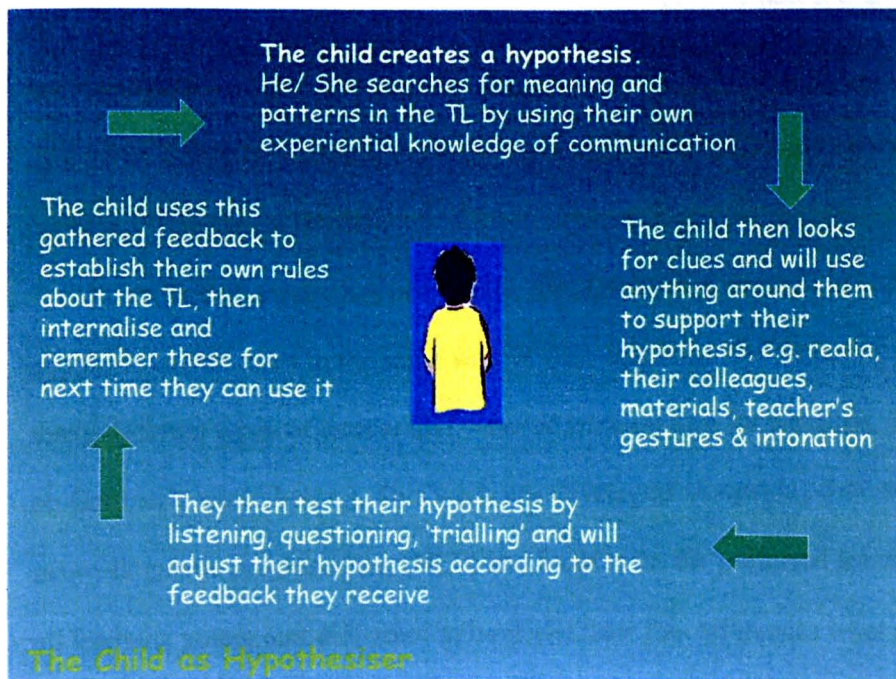
Language was, however, actually central to the cognitive development of the child according to Vygotsky (1978), another development psychologist, and then, later, Bruner (1983, 1990; Bruner and Haste 1987) Vygotsky and Bruner believed that it was instruction from an adult or more able peer that particularly helped children to learn and develop. They also believed that the act of *internalisation* (moving thought from 'out loud' to thought 'in their heads') was helped when an adult or more able peer talked 'thinking' through with the child and instructed or guided them through experiences. Vygotsky (1978) described the difference between what cognitive development a child could achieve on their own compared to the cognitive development a child could achieve when an adult was able to talk thinking through with them as the 'zone of proximal development'.

Bruner (1983, 1990; Bruner and Haste 1987) developed this idea even further and described the cognitive support that could be given to a child by an adult, or a more able peer, as 'scaffolding' through which the child could develop and grow while the adult gave support to their thinking and encouraged them to develop their thinking in different ways.

Donaldson (1978), meanwhile, believed that it was through experiences and trying to 'make sense' of experiences, by asking questions and trying things out, or 'hypothesising', that children were able to develop cognitively. To some extent this links back to what Piaget was trying to understand and explain through his experiments but, perhaps, they were too clinical for him to gain much clearer insights into what the child was really able to do in their own mind. Donaldson's work, in contrast, showed how young children were able to think in ways that Piaget believed they could not.

If we try to apply this 'hypothesising' principle to our young language learners, this could be illustrated in the following diagram:

Figure 2: The child as hypothesiser



This section outlines some of the seminal research on language learning over the past fifty years and describes its implications for TEYL. In his seminal 1959 work, Chomsky posited that the capacity for learning was innate. This idea was developed by the 'Innatists', so-called because they felt that all learning was actually innate, and, therefore, universal. Chomsky, in particular, maintained that there was an innate capacity for language learning in all of us, which he called the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). This idea linked neatly, around the same time, with the 'Critical period hypothesis' (CPH) suggested by Lenneberg (1967) who thought that there was a critical period, up to about the age of eleven, in which children were able to learn language. His hypothesis was that if language was introduced after this period then it was extremely difficult for children to learn. This CPH is often, still, cited as one of the main reasons for starting teaching foreign languages early in the child's schooling. However, both the LAD and the CPH theories, and applications of these, have been heavily questioned. Bruner (1983, 1990; Bruner and Haste 1987) felt that there needed to be a 'Language acquisition support system' (LASS) supplied by adults or carers that would help children to really develop such a LAD and that the 'device' could not function on its own.

More recently, there has been some very interesting research to suggest that people do not all learn in the same way as each other and that there are, probably, many different types of learner and ways of learning (see for example, the discussion on Gardner's work, below). This work has developed alongside other studies into neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) and focuses on the preferred learning style/s that all learners, young and old, seem to have and how this influences what and how they learn. In essence these are known as visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (VAK) learning styles.

Bermen (cited in Ellis and Brewster 2002, p.34) felt that there was a clear link between learning language and preferred learning styles. In research in an average adult class of learners, Bermen found that 29% were visual learners, 34% were auditory learners and a surprising 37% were kinaesthetic learners. Such findings clearly have implications for teaching and the sorts of activities used in class.

Smeets' research in Switzerland (2004) looked at whether young learners acquired vocabulary easier when using their preferred learning style. Her findings showed that, indeed, young language learners did seem to be able to learn more vocabulary when using their preferred learning styles, though her study was with only a small group of young learners and this research would need to be replicated on a larger scale in order to draw any significant conclusions.

It is also valuable here to consider the work of Gardner (1993) who suggested the notion of different *intelligences* that we all have at our disposal. He maintained that, additionally, we individually favour some more than others, each of these to varying degrees. Initially Gardner suggested there were seven such 'Multiple intelligences' but in his later work he posits that there may be even more than these. His initial seven were:

Linguistic Intelligence Where reading, and the use and play with words, such as completing crosswords, is particularly enjoyed by this intelligence. We would probably see a journalist using this intelligence a lot.

Logical-Mathematical Where sorting and ordering are liked by this

- Intelligence** intelligence, which also favours classifying, ranking, ordering and sequencing. It is likely that those who like organising things would show high tendencies to use this intelligence more.
- Spatial Intelligence** This intelligence prefers the use of diagrams, maps, charts, plans, pictures and physically seeing how things fit together in a topographical way. Cartographers, architects and designers are likely to show strong signs of this intelligence.
- Kinaesthetic Intelligence** This intelligence leans toward physical interaction with and the manipulation of themselves and objects. Dancers and artists use this intelligence a great deal.
- Musical Intelligence** Where the use of rhythm, music and song is particularly important to this intelligence and is often seen in songwriters, singers and musicians.
- Interpersonal Intelligence** This intelligence particularly favours personal interaction with others and tend to relate well to others. People who enjoy counselling or work in the caring professions use this intelligence a great deal.

Intrapersonal Intelligence An intelligence which favours internal reflection with personal and private thought about what is happening to them and the world around them. Often religious leaders have a strong tendency to use this intelligence.

(Drawn from Gardner 1993)

The possible variations in favoured intelligences being used by young learners will be discussed later in the chapter.

How young learners learn a foreign language

Further language learning research of relevance to young learners is the interesting work that has been carried out by Cummins (1979) who suggests that there are two types of language that can be taught, *BICS* – basic interpersonal communicative skills, and *CALP* – cognitive academic language proficiency. *CALP* language is that used to talk about aspects of different subject disciplines, for example, the use of formulae in maths or the philosophy of history or art, rather than the mere carrying out of interpersonal communication acts that *BICS* language underpins.

Cummins' work suggests that we often teach the *CALP*-type language in foreign language when, perhaps, we should first teach the *BICS*-type language. He maintains that teaching only *CALP*-type language as the target language makes the task of the language learner much more difficult. If this is the case, then perhaps we should always teach language learners, especially young language learners, the *BICS*-type language first followed by the *CALP*-type language when they are both more able in the target language and cognitively able. Certainly, if we think about the adaptation of some courses for young learners in the past, which perhaps focused more on *CALP*

language such as grammar and syntax, rather than on how to use the language to communicate first, we can see how problems might have arisen and how the idea of introducing BICS language first to young language learners seems to be extremely valid.

Additionally and linked to the above, if a foreign language is introduced to young learners, then it would seem wise to do this in the same way as any other subjects are introduced to them. It is worth pausing for a moment here and reflecting on why young learners are taught anything – science, history, music or any other subject. We introduce a range of subjects to young learners, not as pure or abstract subjects, but by way of an introduction to them of the idea that these interesting aspects of life are to do with them and their experiences. Particularly, we are initially building the foundations of understanding in each subject in a very practical ‘hands-on’ way so that the children can interact with ‘actual’, ‘physical’ and ‘here and now’ and concrete aspects of these at this early and crucial stage of their cognitive development. We are also doing this by scaffolding their learning in each and every subject which is, at the core, a general support for their overall cognitive development. In other words, we would not teach science to young learners at quantum theory level but would teach them about the everyday science that is in the world around them and that they can interact with and understand. This would be the sort of science that they can see, feel and experience and can *cognitively* understand. Topics that can be easily and practically introduced to them like weight, magnetism, growth, healthy eating and the like, would be the sorts of everyday science topics that could be introduced in order that their thinking about ‘science’ aspects of life is based on experiential understanding and knowledge.

The most important aspect of teaching younger learners is that we should approach any, and all, of this teaching with a full understanding of what each age group is cognitively able to understand, relate to and carry out, and also how we can help develop and scaffold their thinking and learning skills further.

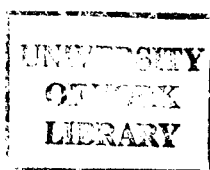
Before embarking on teaching a foreign language to younger learners, then, we need to remember that we are trying to provide opportunities for these learners to find out about and *use* this other language, in a similarly experiential way. Teachers need to show how the new language can have a link with children's everyday lives, can be used and can be fun. Teachers can also, in different ways, depending on the age of the learners, introduce the idea that it is positive to speak another language and then be able to communicate more easily in a world which is becoming 'smaller'. Language teachers, therefore, need to act as 'scaffolders', mentors and language and thinking 'modellers' of this other language for their young learners.

What, then, are the implications of how we believe young learners learn, for teaching them a foreign language? Following on from the discussion above, it would seem that, first and foremost, the structure of the target language is not what we want the young learners to focus on. The teacher will be highly focused on that for them at the beginning of their language learning, and the young learners can move on to thinking about the language itself, step by step, and in detail, as they develop cognitively and through BICS and CALP-type language acquisition of the target language. Initially, we want them to use, and communicate with each other meaningfully in the target language, just as we would want them to notice how, in science, for example, the rock and feather fall in different ways, or that cutting an orange into four, in maths, shows that quarters are equal – from an experiential learning experience.

Only when children have the initial ability to communicate and use the target language as a tool (or science and maths as tools) can we then start telling them some of the detail of how that language works (or the detail of cells growing from the seed, or the extended and detailed way that we can calculate what a quarter of anything is). These concepts are usually developed in greater depth later in cognitive development and educational careers.

We can, though, start to introduce and build on a few aspects of ‘talking about the language’ to younger learners for, as Cameron suggests (2001), even very young learners are able to talk about some aspects of language. As Garvie also states ‘the handling of the tools must become second-nature to the handler’ (1990, p.56). Just as the use of the metalanguage to talk about maths, science, music or art is introduced to young learners, when they are cognitively able, the more they can talk about these subjects the more they can interact and learn about them.

Activities in the language class should, then, be cognitively challenging and developmental for our learners. It would seem that a language level just slightly beyond any young learner’s present stages of use will encourage and interest them in the L2 activity more than if they are continually faced with activities which are too easy, linguistically or conceptually. It is really important that our young learners find a challenge in every language learning activity in order to keep their interest and motivation levels high. A word of caution, however. While young learners themselves are not actively encouraged to understand all the workings of language, or the descriptors of this target language, at the beginning of their language learning, the message for teachers is certainly not ‘grammar and structures do not matter at the beginning’. The teacher must know exactly what is being taught, on a linguistic as



well as a conceptual level, all the time, and should follow a carefully constructed all-round linguistic and cognitive developmental syllabus to support this learning.

In all, when children are learning, developing and learning a foreign or other language they seem to learn, develop and acquire language best when they learn experientially. Experiential learning takes place when the children do things and learn / find out about something by actually doing it. They can thus find out what:

works	or	doesn't work
gets results	or	doesn't get results
hurts	or	doesn't hurt
is fun	or	isn't fun
is nice	or	isn't nice
they like	or	what they don't like

Implications for the TEYL environment and how we teach the target language

Given the above points, it is essential to regularly reflect on the teaching environment we are creating for the teaching and learning of English for our young learners and strive to create the most supportive, experiential, inspirational and rich language learning contexts possible.

The best way to reflect on what we are doing in the TEYL classroom is to regularly check the following 'checklist'. This links to the discussion so far of the 'Building Blocks of TEYL' and builds on our understanding of how young learners learn language:

1. Language activities should create everyday, real-like situations for language use with only the new aspect of these activities being the target language. This way the child will be familiar with everything else that is going on around it, and in the activity, and can, thus, concentrate mainly on the new tool of communication – the target language. This will then give them more confidence with which to approach and use the new language. (Tough 1976; Hughes 2001).

2. Activities should have real and continued exchanges of meaning in them in which the young language learner is involved in real interaction and communication. Activities should also address a variety of learning styles and cater for a wide range of multiple intelligences (Wells 1986; Gardner 1993; Hughes 2001).

3. Activities should cover a variety of topics and should be cross-curricular in approach, as everyday language is. They should be related to situations which are relevant and interesting to the age group and ability range of the learners. These activities should also encourage the young language learners to hypothesise regularly about the language they are learning and acquiring (Donaldson 1978; Tough 1976; Hughes 2001 and 2002).

4. Activities should support and extend children's learning and thinking with teachers acting as 'scaffolders' of this learning. Teachers can then help young language learners to structure their thinking and this, in turn, will help learners to learn how to learn (Bruner and Haste 1987; Vygotsky 1978).

5, Activities should enable all young language learners to be thinkers and problem-solvers and to respond to and develop through challenges found in a wide variety of activities (Fisher 1990; Hughes 2001 and 2004).

6. Activities should be carried out in a stress-free, interesting and supportive environment for the young language learners, and one in which they are not afraid to make mistakes. (Donaldson 1978; Tough 1976; Hughes 2001 and 2004).

7. Activities should be placed in a variety of different contexts, scenarios and situations that will create a highly meaningful, purposeful and motivating learning environment in which young language learners can use and acquire the target language in as natural a context as possible in the classroom (Donaldson 1978; Wells 1986; Hughes 1993).

Regular use of this checklist for reflection on our teaching and on the syllabus being used for teaching language to young learners, can support their learning immeasurably.

Implications for TEYL materials, activities and skills needed by the teacher

In terms of materials, activities and skills needed by the teacher of languages to young learners, in the light of discussion so far, we should make the target language environment as rich as possible, and one in which our young learners are surrounded by meaningful, enjoyable and purposeful use of the target language. To create this we need to ensure that in all our classes the language used:

is contextualised -

- as this aids their L2 understanding and will support any new cognitive and linguistic concepts introduced to them through the target language.

relates to the learners directly -

- and is to do with them, their interests, tastes and preferences.

is linked to immediate and visible action -

- thus allowing the learners to hypothesize about the language they are hearing, linked to any action going on around them.

is both verbal and non-verbal -

- language is not just 'spoken' but is shown physically, with the face and body, and these other aspects of the target language also need to be introduced to and acquired by our young learners.

is meaningfully repetitive -

- as repetition in language learning is highly necessary and valuable and lots of examples of language use in different contexts is an invaluable way to show learners how language can be used in a variety of settings and contexts.

is plentiful -

- we need to input as much of the target language for our young learners to hear and relate to as possible, over a considerable amount of classroom time, in order to aid their acquisition. The implications for the classroom are that classroom management language, as well as the focused language within activities, is also highly important for our learners to hear in target language as it offers a great deal of repetitive, meaningful input on a regular basis.

is challenging and sometimes requires problem-solving skills -

- in order that the learner should be encouraged to 'work out' in the target language, what is happening in each activity which will help them develop their cognitive skills plus motivate them to 'to find out more'.

caters for a wide variety of learners -

- activities should not just cater for one or two preferred learner types or multiple intelligences (or only those linked to the teacher's preferred learning style or favoured multiple intelligences) but cater the variety of learner types which may be in each class

Applying this understanding in the real TEYL classroom

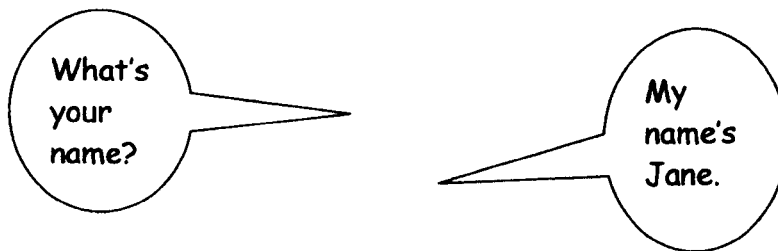
Coming back to the original question posed in this chapter, then, 'why should we use meaningful and purposeful activities in the young learner language class?' An attempt can now be made to answer this, with reference to the above discussion of most of the 'Building Blocks of TEYL'.

Having considered nearly all of these 'building blocks' of understanding in TEYL above, and keeping all we have discussed in mind, we will now focus on the application of this knowledge within meaningful and purposeful activities for the young learner classroom. A few sample activities will now be described (although it is important to bear in mind that there are many different activities for the young language learner which can be just as meaningful and purposeful for their language learning as these examples).

It is essential to remember that activities should consist of 'real' language interaction, in relevant and meaningful contexts for our learners, whatever their age or language level. Activities should be 'scaffolded' and purposeful and should motivate learners. To this end, the activities should be what I call, 'full' language activities as opposed to 'empty' language activities. By this is meant that children need to interact with each other in a meaningful way that involves their real likes, and dislikes, opinions and ideas rather than 'pretend' or falsely-created one. For example, in the target language they could carry out a survey within the class of all their favourite

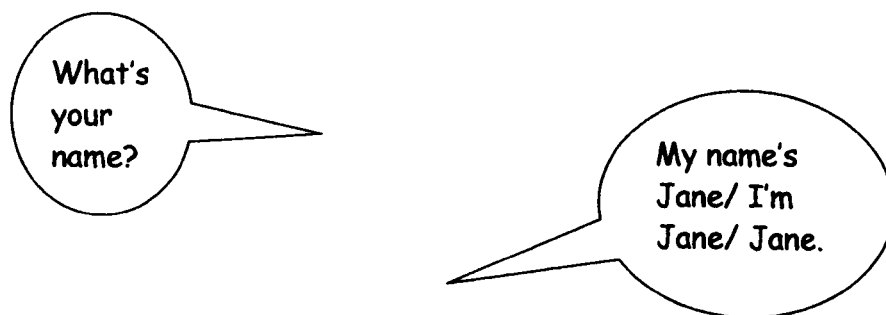
fruit rather than drill or learn names of fruit with no personal link to that particular language. Purposeful activity, like this not only encourages real interaction by the learners, but also gives the learners a wonderful opportunity to talk about themselves, which is always a great motivator. Observation of young learner language classes has shown that the target language is remembered more easily by the learners when that language is linked to themselves and a highly purposeful and meaningful activity.

One way to establish if activities are meaningful for the language class is to check if they are 'full' activities i.e. 'meaning-full' activities have real outcomes for the learners, real contexts, links to their own understanding and interaction with the world and a real need, or motivation, in taking part in the activity. For example, many of us ask our young learners to take part in the following sort of classroom activity dialogue:



However, is this really a meaningful activity in which to ask our young language learners to take part? Do they really need to ask this question of their classmate? It is likely, that they will know each other's names and so, at the basic level, they will not engage cognitively in this sort of activity because they really do not need to ask the question, they really do not need to listen to the answer and they really do not need to problem-solve or acquire any new knowledge or learning in this activity.

This activity is, therefore, very 'empty' of meaning and purpose and should be adapted in order to make it more meaningful and purposeful for these learners. This can be easily done in a variety of ways. For example, one of the ways I like to do this in a classroom is to ask children to draw a face on the top of one of their fingers. They should decide if this 'person' is old/young, male/female, has curly/straight hair, glasses, freckles and so on. Then they should use these finger 'puppets' to take part in an activity that has more meaning than the one above but still focuses on the same language, which is probably on the teacher's syllabus for this stage of the input for this class. The children are usually curious to find out what their friend's finger puppet is called and especially motivated to tell their friend all about their own finger puppet. If the teacher then encourages them to take on the persona of the finger puppets i.e. the puppets are having the conversation, then immediately there will be a buzz in the activity as learners will really need to question each other, will really need to listen for the information and will really need to swap information about each other's finger puppets or 'characters' and they will be really motivated to take part.



The natural extension of this understanding is that the syllabus for TEYL should be topic-centred, activity-based and cross-curricular in nature. This syllabus will ensure that we can include all the above pedagogical principles in our day to day teaching.

Further, this can be done through activities which link directly to the topic being focused on e.g. if introducing language to talk about music then the young learners should be able to hear and be involved, physically, visually, auditorially and kinaesthetically in some form of music making and, in this way, their experiences will support the language and vice-versa. A topic-centred, activity-based and cross-curricular approach is particularly appropriate in TEYL because it creates a very natural language environment in which our young language learners can acquire and develop their target language.

Using this topic-centred, activity-based and cross-curricular approach can particularly help teachers to:

- cater more for different ability levels, learning styles and multiple intelligences
- create a rich context for a wide variety of activities in which the language can be recycled and used in many different ways, and thus be used by the learner and acquired more readily
- create a natural opportunity for lots of practise and repetition of the target language without boredom creeping into the activities
- promote whole class, group, pair and individual work in language learning
- make the language learning process more meaningful and purposeful for all learners at every stage
- encourage the young learners to develop natural language skills as well as allowing for general cognitive development
- increase and promote the relevance of the target language for the learners.

Linked to this approach, the materials should match the cognitive and linguistic stages of the learners, reflect their variety of multiple intelligences (see above), their preferred learning styles and interests and suit the context they are for. The materials should also extend the young learners' established knowledge base, across the curriculum, through the topic and target language chosen. Because of the age and cognitive level of our learners in TEYL, there is a clear need to use a syllabus which encourages learning in general, through suitable challenges for each learner, as well as learning of the target language, so that more than language learning is developed..

As another useful checklist, then, teachers should be able to address the following in the language activities they give to their young learners and ensure that:

- the activity is interesting and relevant for the age and linguistic level of the learners.
- the activity is suitably challenging for individual learners – making sure it is not too hard or too easy for them and catering for different abilities within the class.
- the activity is really purposeful for the learners by checking the learners understand why they are doing it, that there is clearly a real reason and motivation for them to carry the activity out that the teacher has made purpose and meaning clear to them beforehand.
- there is *real* language in the activity. In other words, check these learners use this type of language naturally in their first language in a similar situation.













- there is a real product at the end of the activity e.g. a song sung, information exchanged, a survey finished, a quiz completed, a story listened to, a game played or a role-play engaged in.

Let us now consider one more activity in order to illustrate another meaningful and purposeful activity for our young language learners. Let us look at ordinal numbers that are often taught in the target language. Teachers may well have introduced these in a pairwork dialogue with one learner asking the other ‘When is/When’s your birthday?’. Realistically, in this activity where one learner asks this question of the other, there is not likely to be any *real* interaction going on, as very few young learners would be that interested to listen to the others birthday or take note of it. The activity would not be terribly motivating and little would be seen as meaningful or purposeful in this activity. Each child is likely only to be interested in naming their own birthday. However, if the activity was slightly amended, and one of the pair was given a page of horoscopes such as the following:

Figure 3: Horoscope activity for learning numbers¹

¹ Modelled on Hughes and Brown (1994)

When is your birthday? What is your star sign? Find and read

 <p>Aries (21 March - 19 April)</p> <p>You like: adventure You don't like: waiting for things You need: interesting things to do</p>	 <p>Taurus (April 20 - May 20)</p> <p>You like: comfort You don't like: change You need: to think before you do things</p>	 <p>Gemini (May 21 - June 20)</p> <p>You like: learning and change You don't like: people laughing at you You need: to talk to other people</p>
 <p>Cancer (June 21 - July 22)</p> <p>You like: activity You don't like: failure You need: lots of hugs</p>	 <p>Leo (July 23 - August 22)</p> <p>You like: doing things well You don't like: change You need: a challenge</p>	 <p>Virgo (August 23 - September 22)</p> <p>You like: talking You don't like: lazy people You need: things to be tidy</p>
 <p>Libra (September 23 - October 22)</p> <p>You like: sweets You don't like: crowds You need: lots of exercise</p>	 <p>Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)</p> <p>You like: secrets You don't like: hugs You need: people to agree with you</p>	 <p>Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)</p> <p>You like: sports You don't like: spending money You need: lots of friends</p>
 <p>Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)</p> <p>You like: grown ups You don't like: unhealthy foods You need: to laugh</p>	 <p>Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)</p> <p>You like: your own ideas You don't like: busy people You need: comfort</p>	 <p>Pisces (February 19 - March 20)</p> <p>You like: films and books You don't like: unfairness You need: to live near water</p>

What is your best friend's star sign?

Does he or she match the description? YES NO

then there suddenly becomes a real reason for them to ask each other their birthdays in order to 'tell' each other their corresponding horoscope, just as they would naturally if they were looking at a comic or magazine together.

Additionally, of course, the learner asking the initial question will be scanning the English for the information they need, once they have an answer, looking for the correct time frame for their partner's horoscope and then reading out the actual horoscope to them. After this, of course, the question asker will then scan the horoscopes for their *own* horoscope and then, once both learners look at the page of horoscopes together, will start to look for horoscopes that fit other friends or members of their family. This, then, is an activity that is meaningful, purposeful and links three of the language skills, speaking, listening and reading, neatly into one activity.

A strategy for checking whether an activity is purposeful or meaningful, is to look at it and decide if it is a realistic activity and, if it is not, consider how it could be amended slightly ensuring the language required by the syllabus is still being taught, but in a more meaningful, purposeful and natural way. The above illustrations of activities may serve as a guide.

Assessment, evaluation and reflection in TEYL

Finally, and coming to the final block in the 'Building Blocks of TEYL', if we understand that young learners are cognitively different from older learners, and that we should therefore teach them in a different way, this also means that we should assess their learning in a different way and evaluate our teaching in a different way, too.

It would seem that it is most important to assess young learners' language learning formatively rather than summatively, so that we can help develop the individual child further during the learning process. We should also, then, assess our young learners' learning using the 'approach' used in the above type of language teaching activities. Assessment of learning, therefore, would be by way of the same type of activities that the learners are using in the language lesson. If we introduce a completely different type of activity for assessment from those that the learners are used to, such as a more formal-looking written paper based 'test', they are likely to find it extremely difficult to relate language in this context and will not be able to understand it. If this is the case they will not do particularly well in this sort of activity, or show their true ability, because of this unusual approach/ material they find themselves in. We should also, additionally, make sure that our assessment activities take into account the different

learner types that we might have in each class and reflect these individual learning style or multiple intelligence preferences.

Another point, if using different and more formal 'test' style activities for assessing the learning that has taken place, is that the teacher may not be totally sure what has been assessed. It might be that the teacher has not, in fact, assessed learning, but has only assessed a reaction to a new or unfamiliar activity or instructions. Unless the assessment tools are well-designed the teacher may have no real or substantial reflection or measure of what individual children can accomplish in the target language. The learners may just be reacting to the unnatural tool, perhaps negatively, if they find it difficult to use. It may also be, even more worryingly, that the teacher is unaware of the problems which a new activity, by way of assessment, could make to the success of a child and takes no account of this when looking at the results of the assessment: the consequences of this could be very damaging.

Ideally teachers should informally monitor different learners during normal activities in different lessons, by way of a continuous and rolling assessment, and keep a note of how each individual is developing in the lessons. A student portfolio could also be kept, in which both the young learner and teacher can decide which child-produced materials, created post, and during, language activities, should be put in a file (or portfolio) at regular intervals throughout the year. During these portfolio sessions, the learner will explain why they want this piece of work included and the teacher will note that in the file. This portfolio can be used to illustrate the child's development within the class and school, for their parents and, most importantly, for the child, in order that they can reflect on their learning and further learn how to learn. These portfolios can also move with the learner from class to class, and school to school, to create chronological examples of their language learning.

Teachers, too, should reflect on their own approach to TEYL on a regular basis. This reflection can also be helped by the carrying out of very small-scale action-research in their classrooms to help them clarify what is really happening rather than them just assuming knowledge about what is happening in terms of the learners' learning in the classroom (Hughes 2006). For example, a teacher may feel that only the girls are answering questions voluntarily in class. The teacher could carry out some small-scale research to find out what is really happening, i.e. they could video lessons which include the teacher questioning and then recording who is answering in order to establish if their hypothesis is actually true or not. Following this, the teacher could then put into place some strategies to try and change the situation, if necessary, then record another session of questioning to see if things are changing. Action research can help a teacher develop and reflect on their own teaching, informally and easily, in order to constantly improve and develop the success in their language classes. By the carrying out of small-scale classroom research like this in the young learner language class, teachers can seek evidence that will help them understand, improve and adapt aspects of their teaching, materials or assessment tools in order to enhance the teaching and learning for their young language learners.

To conclude, then, it is clear that young language learners are very different from older language learners and because of this they must be given a suitable learning environment, cognitively and linguistically appropriate tools, and a supportive and 'scaffolded' learning context in which to be successful. All activities in the language class should be meaningful and purposeful so that our young language learners can acquire and use the target language in a natural and enjoyable way, and so that they become and stay motivated to learn.

Our young learners are our older learners of the future: the more successful they are earlier, the more successful they will be in the long run.

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Supporting Independence: Teaching English to young learners within a three-stage learning journey

PART 1

This article will consider three stages which young language learners travel through, from being highly dependent on the teacher, then becoming supportive and actively contributing put into the activities they are involved in in the classroom, until finally learners become independent users of the target language.

The final stage of independence is usually a long way down the language learning road for most of our learners and, it would seem, with young language learners the majority of teaching and learning takes place within the second or middle stage of this three-stage journey – the supported independence stage. Therefore, in this article we will particularly consider this stage and take a look at some example activities found in the first two stages for our young learners.



By Annie Hughes

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The language learning journey

Learning anything new is a journey. I will discuss the journey that our young language learners will be travelling on below, but, first, it may be valuable for us to consider why we teach foreign languages to young learners? (by 'young' here I mean learners up to the age of about twelve and still in school).

Our present understanding of how children learn is that they learn to think, problem solve, question and try to make sense of things around them best when they interact with the things they are being introduced to. Learning is successful when the learners have the guidance, intellectual and emotional support created by a teacher who understands how learners learn and can provide the most suitable learning environment and teaching activities to support this learning. This teacher will be able to introduce the target subject in an interactive and meaningful way for the learners, whilst at the same time will model learning, questioning and thinking and by doing so will help the children develop learning and thinking

skills of their own. They will therefore see their role as a mentor or guide rather than a disciplinarian or examiner.

If we introduce foreign language teaching to our young learners, then we should, presumably, do so in the same way as we introduce any other subjects to them i.e. show them how this target language can interact with their own lives. We would lay the foundations of this language use, show them how this new language can have a link with their everyday lives and introduce the idea that it is positive to speak other languages and communicate more easily in a world which is becoming 'smaller'.

What would we teach in the target language?

First and foremost, the structure of the target

language is not what we would want the young learners to focus on at the beginning of their language learning journey. We would want them to focus, initially, on the way to communicate with this new language, just as we would want them to notice how, in science, the seeds grow first, or that cutting an orange into four, in mathematics, shows you what quarters are and so on. We would be introducing the young learners to how this subject can be linked to their own lives and can have meaning for them. We would also be laying the foundation for further language learning to come.

Only when the children have the ability to communicate by using the target language can we then start introducing them to some of the 'nitty gritty' of how that language works. These concepts are usually introduced later in their cognitive development and when they can comfortably interact with the knowledge base in the subject, in order to, then, fully understand that 'nitty gritty' of the subject.

In other words, we must make sure that our learners can handle the tools of learning and interact comfortably with any subject before we ask them to strip down what they are learning and look at its component parts. Do we learn to drive by stripping down the car engine first and putting it back together before we get behind the wheel? Of course not, because if we did that our roads would be a great deal emptier! If we ask young language learners to strip down the subject itself before they could actually use and understand what they can do with it, they would rapidly become very demotivated and disinterested in that subject, I believe.

The language learning journey for our young learners

So, we are taking our young language learners on a three-stage journey from total dependence as learners of the language to the goal, long-term, of independence in that target language. However, the majority of the language learning will take place in the supported independence stage, the second or middle stage of this lengthy journey. The whole journey can be imagined as a continuum along which, over the years in which they are language learning, our learners move from dependence (needing a lot of support from the teacher) to supported independence needing less teacher support and some student involvement as they move along it until they finally, and after a fairly lengthy journey, become fully independent users of that language.

The dependence stage in any language learning journey is at the very beginning when the teacher is the 'knower' of the language and gives the learner more or less all the interaction and knowledge of the target language through the activities they use in the classroom.

If we think about the first, or dependence stage, we can understand that this can be particularly teacher-led and teacher-controlled as the learners have no knowledge, as yet, of the subject. For example, the teacher may ask the children to carry out an activity in which they are in pairs and ask and answer each other with dialogue or 'chunks' of language which has been given to them in advance of the activity, by the teacher, such as:

1st pupil: What is it? (showing picture of fruit to their partner)
2nd pupil: A banana

The language is controlled and the teacher is carefully inputting the language, managing the dialogue and interaction that is taking place and, hopefully, giving the learners confidence and new vocabulary in that target language. The children are involved, are using visual aids to help the activity, are cognitively involved in

the activity and dialogue and are gaining a sense of achievement in the target language.

However, because the learners can quickly move on to the next stage of their language learning journey, from this dependence stage of learning it is important for the teacher to realise when the children can start to give some input to the activities themselves and, therefore, move onto the supported independence stage of their language learning journey.

For example, take this simple dialogue which the teacher has given to the learners:

1st pupil: What's your name?
2nd pupil: My name's
(child gives their name)

This is a typical pairwork dialogue from a beginner class that we would probably all recognise. If the children know each other they would not really need to ask/answer this question at all and would not need to take part in it cognitively. The activity, then, is what could be called, an 'empty' activity and fairly purposeless for the learners. And yet, we can understand that these particular structures may be on the syllabus, at this stage, and the teacher still needs to control and support the activity and the language learning which is going on.

The teacher should move this activity to the supported independence stage, make the activity more student-focused and far more meaningful for the learners, without losing the focus of the lesson and the language focus, but in a way which would encourage more interaction and learning from the learners which would then encourage more cognitive involvement on their part. The learners could use the language in a more 'real' or 'natural' way, so that they would be asking the question they were given because there was a reason for asking it and because they wanted to know the answer to it. This would then make them far more actively involved in the dialogue and, ultimately, in the language. The language would then be memorable and more easily acquired by the learners.

This is how this activity could be adapted with the above example: the students could draw a face on the end of one of their fingers, and can choose if this 'character' is a male/female, old/young, with long/short hair, glasses/freckles/moustache etc. and, of course, decide what the name of the puppet is. Then, using this simple face drawn on the end of their finger as a puppet, the learners, in the same pairs, ask the same question. However, this time the puppets are 'talking' to each other and the answer is not known (rather than the pupils asking each other when they know each other's names). There is now a reason to ask the question and an enthusiastic involvement by each learner to talk about their character.

In this revised version of the activity, there is now far more student participation, though the teacher is still giving the learners the same activity, the same language and is still in control of the class, the time frame and the language practice. However, this time the learners are able to input some information

of their own, are involved in creating something new and choosing what and how to create this puppet, choosing a name for it and are then cognitively much more involved in the activity, while using the target language at the same time. The learners feel they are involved and in control of some aspects of the dialogue while the teacher is still in control of the class management, language practice and output.

The result is a clear example of the supported independence stage of learning. Figure 1 below shows, in diagrammatic form, what these stages look like and how activities fit into the language learning journey:

Dependence	Supported Independence	Independence
Teacher-led	Teacher AND learner-led	Wholly learner-led
Very early stages of language learning	Starts soon after the beginning of language learning has started	The long-term aim of language learning : independence in the target language
Very controlled	students encourage to input	

Fig. 1

Obituary: Dr Caroline Clapham

It is with great sadness that I am writing to announce the death of our former colleague Dr Caroline Clapham who passed away at her home on 14th December. Caroline worked in Cambridge from September 2002 until the end of March 2004 as a member of the team working on IELTS within the Research and Validation Group. During her time with us she made many friends and is fondly remembered for her modesty and friendly nature, as well as for her wide knowledge of language testing. Unfortunately, not long after starting to work for Cambridge ESOL, Caroline was diagnosed with the illness which led to her retirement on grounds of ill-health, cutting short a distinguished career in such an untimely way.

Before joining Cambridge ESOL, Caroline had already established herself as a leading expert in language testing and as a much-loved member of the language testing community at large. She was an experienced language tester and in her early career in the 1970s constructed the first versions of the "PLAB test" for the Professional and Linguistics Assessment Board of the General Medical Council in the UK for testing the listening comprehension of overseas doctors.

Caroline was an established researcher and in coming to Cambridge after many years working for the University of Lancaster, she was well-placed to join the IELTS research team, having been the research coordinator for the IELTS development project in the 1980s. Her doctoral dissertation focussed on the development of IELTS investigating the effect of background knowledge on reading comprehension.

This work contributed significantly to the revision of IELTS in 1995 and was published in 1996 as Volume 4 in the Studies in Language Testing series: The Development of



Dr Caroline Clapham

By Dr Michael Milanovic Chief Executive at Cambridge ESOL

IELTS: A study of the effect of background knowledge on reading comprehension. The quality of this work was recognised in the same year when she was presented with the Jacqueline A. Ross Dissertation Award.

Caroline was always generous with her time and supported people in many different ways. She regularly reviewed for academic journals, contributed to editorial advisory boards and served the International Language Testing Association (ILTA) as both Secretary/Treasurer and President. Together with her colleague Dianne Wall, she edited Language Testing Update for many years and in recognition of her outstanding service, she was awarded an honorary membership of ILTA. Caroline will remain an inspiration to the many who knew her, and especially to those who worked with her or who were taught by her. For over 20 years she advised aspiring language testers from around the world and was widely respected by

her students for her supportive supervision and fair judgements as a doctoral examiner.

After her retirement, colleagues from Cambridge ESOL continued to visit her at home and she was always eager to catch up with news from the world of language testing and the events at Cambridge. Those who visited her commented on her enduring good humour and dignity in the face of deteriorating health. We are now considering ways in which we can honour and mark Caroline's contribution to the field of language testing. All of us at Cambridge ESOL would like to extend our deepest sympathy to her husband Christopher, and to her children Phoebe and Tom.

Supporting Independence:

Teaching English to young learners within a three-stage learning journey

PART 2

Further examples of supported independence stage language activities for the young learner classroom

Within the supported independence stage of language teaching it is important for us, as teachers of foreign languages to young learners, that we make sure our learners are suitably challenged within the language lesson, in order for cognitive involvement and development to take place in the language class and in line with the way we understand young learners learn and develop.

Here is another example of the way that teachers can encourage the learners in the supported independence stage of language learning. The teacher may ask the learners to sing a song such as 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes' a very useful song for introducing and recycling language for parts of the body which is well used in language lessons for young learners around the world.

However, as teachers, we can easily forget that just singing a song may not be very purposeful or meaningful to the learners. It may not involve much in the way of cognitive activity for our young learners and this, then, will mean very little learning will take place. So, instead, we need to make the activity more challenging cognitively and more meaningful and purposeful for the learners in order that they gain from it.

As an alternative to the above activity which keeps the learners very much in the dependent stage of language learning, the teacher could do the following:

The teacher could sing the first verse with the class with all of them pointing to the particular parts of the body they are singing about, to introduce or remind learners of both this vocabulary and the tune for the song. Then, the teacher should organise the learners into groups of 4 or 5 and ask each group to create another verse for this song focusing on one part of the body to sing about. They will use the first verse as a model and will write/ create their own verse.

To support this activity, the teacher could write the following on the board:

Head, shoulders, knees and toes. Knees and toes.
Head, shoulders, knees and toes. Knees and toes.
Eyes, ears, mouth and nose.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes. Knees and toes.
Then the teacher could make a point of showing the learners the pattern of the verse while pointing out that:

- the lines are really like a list of parts of the body.
- on three lines the last two items are repeated.
- there are 8 parts of the body, in total, in the verse.

Now the teacher explains to the learners that they will create a new verse for the song and that each group of learners should use the same pattern and model.

The teacher can also give each group a different part of the body to sing about e.g.
group 1: the head and face

- group 2: arms and hands
- group 3: legs and feet
- group 4: inside the body!

Thus each group is challenged to only find vocabulary for that part of the body.

To help the learners, the teacher may want to put some vocabulary of body parts on the board, have some picture dictionaries in each group with parts of the body illustrated and labelled and, then, go round each group and help the learners by reminding them what these words sound like. The teacher could also 'translate' into English the parts of the body the learners ask for in mother tongue or point to and name in their mother tongue.

The teacher should give the learners enough time to complete this activity- probably around 15-20 minutes and as they are working on their group verse, the teacher should go round each group and help them with words for their verse and to complete their verse.

Once all the verses are complete then each group should sing their verse and point to the



By Annie Hughes

Annie Hughes is a confirmed plenary speaker at the 31st Annual TESOL Greece International Convention, on March 13-14 at the Hellenic American Union, Athens. For further information: www.tesolgreece.org

Dependence	Supported Independence	Independence
Teacher-led	Teacher and learner-led	Wholly learner-led
Learners take part in a dialogue with a known outcome	Learners take part in a dialogue with an unknown outcomes	Learners take part in an open dialogue
(What's your name?)	(What's your name? With simple finger puppets)	(Meeting & greeting someone new and having a conversation with them)
Sing a song (Head, shoulders..)	Use a song model and create a new verse/song (Create 'Class Body Song')	Sing songs in TL

Fig. 2

parts of the body they are singing about. This is the fun part of the activity and is very enjoyable. Afterwards the verses can be collected into the 'Class Body Song' which the class can sing again in the future. This is clearly a supported independence language activity because the activity is real for the learners, is to do with the learners and their own world (their bodies), is full of interaction, based on the learner's knowledge of the world, is purposeful and meaningful with a real and fun outcome that can be referred to in the future (e.g. if all the verses are collated into 'Class Body Song') and is memorable. This is the sort of activity that will enable our young learners to acquire the target language with understanding and enthusiasm.

Thus the teacher has used an activity for learners which can easily be seen as a supported independence type activity. The learners have some choice in the activity but are supported by the teacher yet allowed to work in an independent way and input some things to the activity. The teacher is fully in control of the language which is being introduced and used meaningfully, yet is able to make the activity more

learner-centred at the same time. An overview of the stages and how these activities fit into them

In figure 2 we can see the activities mentioned above set out in a table to show when and how they fit into the different stages of the three stage language journey outlined above:

Supported Independence stage activities should therefore be activities which:

- are highly contextualised
- are interactive for the learner
- allow for involvement and choice on the part of the learner
- relate to the learners directly
- are linked to an immediate and visible action/situation
- are both verbal and physically active
- are meaningful and purposeful
- are linked to real social interaction between the learners
- have a real outcome

We must remember that we are dealing with learners that are probably not able to understand language as an abstract concept as yet but who nevertheless:

- are able to understand their own world
- have a lot of knowledge of their own world which they can bring to the classroom and activities
- are generally highly motivated when it comes to learning
- frequently have few inhibitions
- are willing and enthusiastic when it comes to new experiences
- are curious to learn
- enjoy new activities and can take part in them with enthusiasm if they are interesting for them

These are important factors to remember when we come to think about how children learn a language or, indeed, how any learner learns a language. Children need plenty of support and structure when they are learning language, but within this language learning journey they must also be encouraged to be active participants.

Why is this approach important?

Why do we want our learners to travel on this sort of journey towards independence in the target language? Language is all about interacting with others in a variety of ways and

forms. We are trying, first and foremost, to teach our young learners to enjoy interacting in the target language whilst also become partly responsible for their thoughts and actions in that target language. We want them to become responsible for active learning and to reflect on their learning in order for them to understand how to learn and so that any language interaction will help them build on this and be as successful and meaningful as possible for them.

By encouraging this supported independence stage of language learning for our young learners we are enabling them to develop cognitively, to be aware of language and the way it can be used, to reflect on their own mother tongue use and appreciate it and to understand how they learn and develop in general. If we further encourage our young language learners to reflect on their language learning, and help them think about ways that they can support their own learning, e.g. by encouraging reflective thinking for a few minutes after each language activity; by encouraging learners to use different strategies for remembering the new language introduced, such as learner journals, filling in vocabulary books, creating charts for the wall of newly introduced vocabulary and the like, then we are helping them be more aware of learning itself which will only aid their learning and development in future.

How can we create the most suitable environment for this language learning journey to take place?

We need to always be aware of the language teaching activities we are using with our young learners. We should evaluate them regularly and ensure that the learners themselves can add something to the activity so that they are meaningful and purposeful for these learners as well as memorable. As teachers, we must check through activities and ask ourselves if they are meaningful and purposeful, interactive and interesting to our learners at each and every stage of our teaching and their learning, whether we are using a course-book or our own materials. We need to be aware if we are using activities which reflect the supported independence stage of learning, or whether we only use activities which keep the learners as dependent learners and are thus not developing further in the journey? If we find it is the latter, we must consider ways to adapt activities to make them more learner-led as well as teacher-led, so that our learners are cognitively involved in their own learning, are challenged and interested in the language activities so that we can teach and support our young language learners to develop a sound foundation in the target language.

It can be exciting to be a learner and if learners feel they are actively involved in their own learning, taking some responsibility for it through actions within the class activities, then learning can be especially exciting, rewarding and successful. As teachers, we need to help our learners become successful learners through much more use of the supported independence stage of learning and not constrain them by keeping them in the dependent stage of learning as to do so will slow down and perhaps hinder their eventual independence.

*Annie Hughes is Senior Teaching Fellow, Department of Educational Studies, University of York. She is the Director of the MA in TEYL, the first distance UK MA focusing entirely on teaching English as a foreign or additional language to young learners of school age. She is a TEYL consultant, trainer/trainer/developer, teacher/trainer/developer, writer and speaker and has been involved in many fascinating TEYL global projects. She has written a variety of articles, books and courses on teaching English to young learners. Her materials for teaching include: Carousel 1 & 2 (1991 Longman), Treasure Trail 3 & 4 (1994 Penguin), Carnival of Song (1998 Cornelson) and JET: Songs and Rhymes (2001 Mary Glasgow). Her latest online training course for those new to and interested in learning more about TEYL is An Introduction to Teaching English to Young Learners (2007 Heinle <http://eltadvantage.ed2go.com/eltadvantage>). She is also co-creator of the Penguin Young Readers Series.

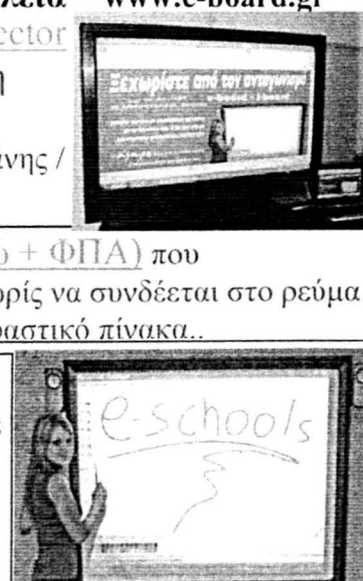
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Hughes, A (2011a) 'Teaching reading in English as a foreign language to young learners: A global reflection.'
In Farstrup, A, E. & Samuels, J. S. (Eds.) *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction. Fourth Edition*. Delaware: International Reading Association

Teaching Reading in English as a Foreign Language to Young Learners: A Global Reflection

Annie Hughes

In this chapter, we consider the situation with regards to the teaching of reading in English as a foreign or second or additional language to young learners. On the whole, we focus on children learning English in a non-English setting, rather than children learning English in an English-speaking environment. However, many of the issues and principles raised for English as a foreign language (EFL) apply across the board to English as a second language (ESL) or English as an additional language (EAL). Throughout the chapter, we consider young learners learning English up to the age of around 11 or 12 years, or those in primary, or first, formal school of their educational careers.

Given that teaching English to young learners (TEYL) is delivered in varied forms by a variety of teachers in different teaching situations, we first take a look at the context of EYL teaching in some detail so that the rest of the discussion is set within this context. We briefly review what we believe the links are with children's development and learning and then discuss language learning for young learners before considering our understanding of the teaching of reading in TEYL and what different research tells us about aspects of it. Following on from this, we consider what the implications may be for the teaching of reading in TEYL, particularly the creation of an English literacy environment. We also review some practical strategies for the teaching of reading to young English language learners.

Sadly, there is a dearth of research in TEYL, and the teaching of reading in TEYL in particular, but we consider some of the research that has been carried out in this area. We also refer to research carried out by practitioners of TEYL and action research carried out by TEYL practitioner mature students of the MA in TEYL at the University of York.

As Shanahan (2002) outlines, not all researchers may be interested in whether findings make a difference in the classroom, when he states, “not all researchers are interested in whether their research is used by practitioners...Practitioners and researchers have different conceptions about what research is, how research should be read, and how it should be used” (p. 10). The TEYL practitioners carrying out action research in their own classrooms, and those researchers and reading specialists referred to later, do seem to be “interested in whether their research is used by practitioners” in classrooms.

The Context for TEYL

Reading, and the teaching of reading, is very complex in TEYL because of the varied settings in which we can find TEYL being carried out and the variables within TEYL classrooms. Sometimes children learning English as a second or foreign language are doing so after they have been taught to read in their first language, and sometimes not. Additionally, sometimes they have been, or are being, taught to read English as a totally different script from their first language. This script can be completely different from English, or just a little different, and often children learning to read in English are cognitively and chronologically more advanced than children would normally be when reading is introduced in their first language.

Importantly, we must also remember that, culturally, there may be huge differences between how reading is taught in the child’s first language and how it is used in TEYL. This might depend on whether the first language is in an oral or text-driven culture, what local or cultural ideas of literacy are, what ideas on literacy children bring to the classroom, and how these might impact on the teaching of reading in TEYL (Au, 2002; Klippel, 2006). Additionally, materials available to children within the TEYL classroom may be linguistically suitable for their language level in the new language but totally unsuitable for, or even well below, their cognitive or interest level and vice versa.

Given the targets set for, and by, teachers, schools, and parents, in EFL, one can understand that teachers may be more concerned with teaching words and spellings in the new language but perhaps not even aware that initial reading in this target language should be built on a great deal of oral and repetitive input before the focus can shift to individual written words and letters (Ponterotto, 2001). As Au (2002) states,

A factor that handicaps the academic advancement of English language learners is teachers' tendency to be overly concerned about surface features of language, such as correct pronunciation of English, rather than the content of the ideas students are trying to communicate. (p. 403)

In many cases, TEYL teachers forget, or are just not pedagogically aware or trained to note, that the learners need to be highly supported when learning to read in the target language, in a very particular way, even though these learners may have had instruction in learning to read, or even be successful readers, in their first language. Problematically, these teachers might assume that the learners will be able to cope with reading in the target language by way of transferring skills from their first language, but this may just not be the case.

However, here we are, already thinking about issues and concerns about reading in TEYL when first, perhaps, we need to set the scene and describe the context for TEYL.

Why Are Young Learners Learning English as a Target Language?

How and why do children come to the TEYL classroom? There can be a number of routes into these classrooms for young learners. If we think globally about the TEYL, then we have to be aware that there is no typical classroom setting for this type of learning and no typical teacher providing the teaching and input. The child might be taught English at school as part of the regular curriculum. Although worldwide, until fairly recently, this was not so common, it is now becoming increasingly the case as more and more governments decide to take responsibility for teaching EFL (a) in formal state schooling and (b) to younger and younger age groups of learners (Rixon, 2000). Yet, the picture is so very different from country to country. For example, in some parts of Spain, it is quite normal for TEYL to be introduced to learners as young as 3 or 4 years of age, whilst in some parts of China, TEYL is introduced only at secondary school age. In Rixon's (2000) global survey of TEYL and its component parts, like the level and quality of teacher training, starting ages for the learners, and materials used, she found that of the 42 countries and regions surveyed, 32 had TEYL in state primary school, with more of the remaining 10 coming on-stream with some state teaching of English in the near future (Rixon, 2004).

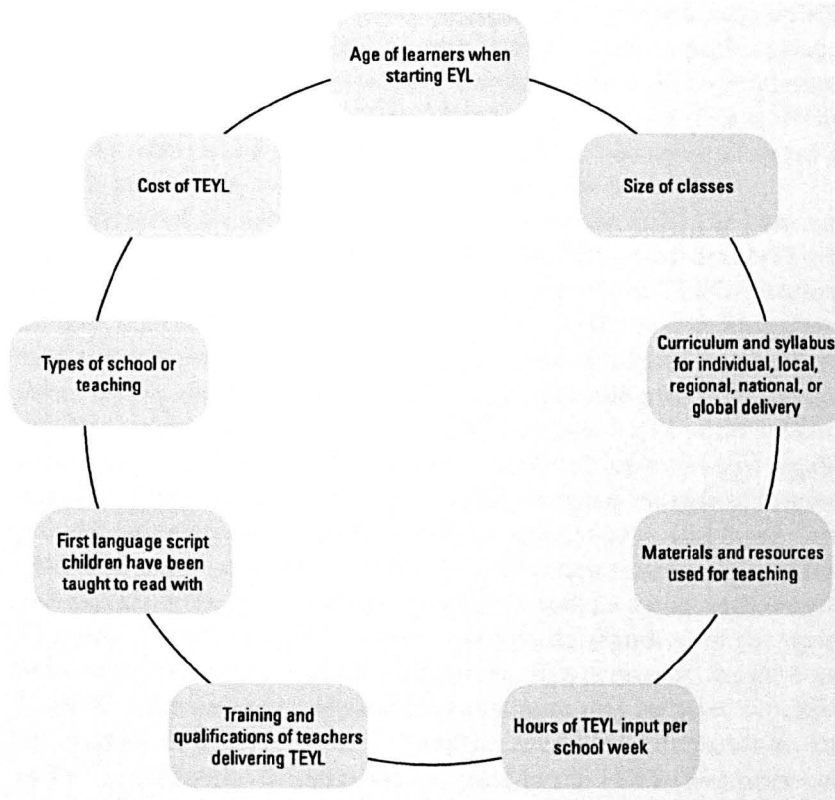
Embarrassingly, in the United Kingdom, there is no formal introduction of foreign languages in the primary, or first, school in the National Curriculum. Although plans have been made for introducing language teaching at this level from 2012, we are still waiting to see much in the way of curriculum plans for this, and even if it does take place as forecast, there may be a great shortage of language teachers to carry out the teaching. However, just as in many other countries worldwide, in some state schools in the United Kingdom, foreign-language teaching is being carried out on an ad hoc basis, either within the school day, supported by the school head teachers and governors as part of their local curriculum, or as an after-school club activity.

In other European countries, however, there is more of a concerted effort at TEYL in the state primary or first school with many education ministries treating the teaching of English as a core aspect of their own curricula (Doye, 2001; Klippel, 2006). In other countries around the world, where provision of TEYL is not supported by the government, parents generally decide to send their children to private language schools. As with state provision, this teaching is extremely varied, both in level of knowledge and training of the teachers and in a suitable syllabus for language learning at different ages. As we cannot describe a typical view of the EFL class or teacher here, it may be valuable to see the many variables in TEYL as illustrated in Figure 13.1. To add to the already rather disparate view of TEYL, there is no typical age at which the teaching of English, and thus the teaching of reading in English, might start.

The teaching methodologies, syllabuses, and materials used in these different deliveries are not always standardised, may not even be evaluated, and therefore, the English language knowledge of the children locally, regionally, or nationally will be completely varied. This, in turn, leads to secondary schools inducting children into their English language lessons with wildly varied levels of knowledge, acquisition, and expertise. Sadly, what often happens, and what happened in the United Kingdom in the primary foreign languages teaching project of the 1970s, is that the secondary teachers will start at the beginning again, no matter what level individual learners may have reached. This, of course, can be extremely counterproductive for language learning, the individual's motivation, and the long-term language results.

Already you will be able to see the difficulties facing us when we try to get an overview of the TEYL situation, and so far we have only talked about the different age groups and delivery points! It seems that there are at least nine different but major variable issues in TEYL (see Figure

Figure 13.1. The Variables Involved in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL)



13.1). One of these is the huge variation in numbers of children in TEYL classes. Classes can range from one-to-one or small-group tuition in private teaching right through to class sizes of 60–70+ in some schools, with, of course, everything in between.

The background and training of the teachers who are involved in TEYL is also hugely varied, for a whole host of reasons. It is reassuring to find that in many countries where responsibility for teaching foreign languages in their primary schools is taking place, the training and development of TEYL professionals is now being taken seriously by the government. There are also many private language schools and chains of private language schools that are highly professional in their approach to teaching, and thus TEYL teacher training and development is a serious part of their work, too.

There are trained teachers specialising in TEYL (a wonderful but rare group), trained teachers who have been asked to get involved in TEYL with no training, and teachers with no qualifications in teaching but who might speak English as a first language from an English-speaking country but, again, are not necessarily trained; for example, in Argentina, around 40% of all TEYL teachers fall into this category (Rixon, 2000). There are also teachers with no teaching qualification and no fluency in English but who are told to do this teaching by their schools!

In terms of the local curriculum or syllabus for TEYL, as I am sure you will have guessed by now, the situation for TEYL teachers and learners is also as extremely varied as all other aspects of TEYL described already. (*Curriculum*, in this discussion, will be the overarching structure of any national, regional, or local provision of education, whilst *syllabus* will be the lesson-based and detailed planning for learning that will be carried out in the classroom). Sometimes, TEYL is set within a national curriculum, as is the case in 32 of the 42 countries and regions included in Rixon's (2000) survey. It is also presently the case in Norway, Greece, Germany, Mexico, Hong Kong, parts of Spain, and Japan from 2011, and many other countries. Whilst in others, the local providers, and especially the private language schools, will be using a syllabus for EYL provision based on their perceived understanding of the needs of local customers (in this case, of course, this is usually the parents). Given that the national and local teaching input may be based on different syllabus designs, because of the national and local demands for and of TEYL, the materials and resources used in the TEYL classrooms will also be extremely varied. Additionally, the approach to the syllabus and materials used in TEYL locally, regionally, or nationally will also have an impact on the formal or informal assessment of TEYL.

Linked to these differences in types of teaching is also the difference between hours of TEYL teaching. The range of input is from as little as 30 minutes per week to the staggering 50–100% of input per day in the target language, if the approach used is an immersion-type one (Rixon, 2000). So, the acquisition rates, amount of English being learned, and level of linguistic ability attained in the target language varies phenomenally from classroom to classroom, let alone region to region or country to country.

In addition, there has been a huge rise in the use of globally created and administered assessment tools in TEYL, particularly the use of such tests as Cambridge ESOL's TEYL exams, "Starters", "Movers", and "Flyers" and Trinity College's Graded Examinations in Spoken English,

particularly the Initial Steps With Trinity. This enormous and continuously growing demand for language tests for young English language learners not only reflects the growth of TEYL around the world but also has a huge impact on syllabus design and the target-language learning outcomes established by schools and teachers, which have often become very assessment driven but which, sadly, does not always lead to successful language acquisition or use in the long run.

As Rixon (2004a) outlines:

The most appropriate means of assessing language in children may also be somewhat unfamiliar to teachers, children [and parents!] used to the models of assessment that might exist in other curriculum areas. We may have to face the fact that in some contexts what seem to be the 'best' EYL assessment means may not yet be widely acceptable. (p. 36)

She further states,

A very important issue is that exams have exam syllabuses and these can have very strong effects not only on the teaching of Young Learners but possibly on the contents of future publishing materials. We need to ask how the exam boards arrived at their syllabuses in the first place. A major source of a least one case was existing YL textbooks. There seems to be a danger of a 'closed and possibly vicious circle' here. (2004b, p. 4)

The Council of Europe has also designed a junior version of its language portfolio so that children and schools can keep a record of students' progress in the target language(s) (CILT, 2006). This particular approach to record keeping and language learning incentives is based on the children completing a portfolio, mainly with "I can..." statements completed about their learning, and keeping examples of their work in the portfolio. This is more of a child-centred approach to assessment, of course, but even so, some concerns and problems have arisen even with this. A few countries, including Eire and Norway, have had to adapt the portfolio to fit their own national needs more directly.

It also needs to be mentioned here that TEYL is expensive. Many parents have to pay a lot of money for the provision of this teaching if they use private schools, and even in countries where TEYL provision is made in state schools, there is often a feeling that the school is not teaching English as well as the private school, so parents will send their children for additional lessons in private schools or with a private tutor to speed up their acquisition of the target language. This creates an even wider

ability range within state school classrooms delivering TEYL, and thus the problems outlined previously become further compounded.

How Do We Think Children Learn Language and Develop Cognitively, and How Does This Inform Our Understanding in TEYL?

If we want to look at how we can address the teaching of reading in TEYL, then we also need to be aware of how we think young learners learn foreign or other languages and link this understanding with what we know about how young learners learn in general. In this section, we briefly consider our understanding of first-language acquisition and cognitive development, then link this with our understanding of how young learners learn a foreign language.

We have no room here to consider all the studies that have been carried out into children's language learning and cognitive development in their first language or how these might inform our understanding in TEYL, but we mention some theories and ideas from first-language cognitive development and learning that seem to have particular relevance and interest for TEYL practitioners today. Given that we have illustrated the varied situation in the TEYL world, we here consider what might be seen as ideal or best practice rather than widespread practice in reality.

We understand that the child tries to work things out for himself as a lone scientist (Piaget, 1967), especially when this is particularly enhanced by the scaffolding of an adult or more able peer (Bruner, 1983, 1990; Bruner & Haste, 1987; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Wood, Bruner, and Ross highlight features of scaffolding thinking for the child as keeping the child's interest in the task, encouraging the child to stay focused on the task, simplifying it for the child by splitting it into steps, showing the child a range of ways to carry it out, highlighting the important things which the child should or could do in the task, helping the child handle any confusion and/or frustration in the task, and modelling different ways to carry out the task. In addition, there need to be enough opportunities for plenty of zones of proximal development to take place in the child's learning, that is, opportunities for the adult or teacher to aid, enhance, or extend the child's understanding and thinking in a situation so that they can do it themselves in the future (Brewster, 1991; Brewster & Ellis, 2002; Cameron, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). As Vygotsky says, "What a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow" (p. 87).

We also need to allow for the learner to assimilate and accommodate new knowledge and develop understanding (Piaget, 1967), although we would not now believe that the child could only develop when he or she had progressed chronologically through the stages Piaget said were necessary. Many of us will remember, perhaps with concern, the influence Piaget's work had on our understanding in the 1970s of reading readiness and how it was used, and critically, how some learners were stopped from moving on in their reading because teachers did not feel the learners were ready for the next stage. (Brewster, 1991; Cameron, 2001; Piaget, 1967).

However, being one of the first to identify that the child did try to make sense of the world for himself, and that learning and development was more of a bottom-up process than previously understood, Piaget has some relevance to us today. Much of his laboratory work and assumptions about children's development has been illustrated as flawed by the likes of Donaldson (1978), although she does agree with him that the child tries to make sense of the world for himself when she says the child "actively tries to make sense of the world from a very early part of his life: he asks questions, he wants to know" (Donaldson, 1978, p. 86). Linked with this, Donaldson believes that it is particularly through experiential learning, trying to make sense of their experiences, asking questions, and trying things out, or hypothesizing, that children are able to develop. One can infer, then, that if in any learning situation, including TEYL, children are highly scaffolded, given the support of innumerable zones of proximal development by adults/teachers, and are allowed to hypothesize as they make sense of the world around them, then they are likely to be in the most successful environment for cognitive development and learning.

In terms of new language acquisition, though, we should also link this understanding of child development with the more recent work of functionalists, who suggest that language develops within a functional context rather than, as the innatists believe, through a universal language acquisition device common to all (Chomsky, 1965, 1972; Halliday, 1975, 1993). Given a functional setting in the TEYL class, supported by routines, rituals, regular interaction with others, and exposure to functional language and, importantly, reasons for using it through everyday meaningful activities with the target language at the core, this should enable our young language learners to learn the target language. This understanding must guide our approach to teaching English as a foreign, second, or additional language (Halliday, 1993; Wells, 2009). As Wells describes, "Rather than operating with abstract rules derived from universal grammar, children

form and modify hypotheses about regular linguistic patterns, based on their increasing experience of language in use” (p. 257).

This approach also echoes the suggestion by Bruner that there needs to be a language acquisition support system supplied by adults or carers that will help children develop their language (Bruner, 1983, 1990; Bruner & Haste, 1987). This understanding about language development is clearly evident in the research carried out by Wells (2009) in Bristol. He uses the term *meaning makers* to describe young children when describing their acquisition and use of language, and states,

Children search for patterns based on their experience, both cognitive and linguistic, of the speech of the particular linguistic community in which they are growing up, where the distinction between what is lexical and what is grammaticized continues to change over generations. (p. 257)

This is further echoed in Donaldson’s (1978) observations about the growth of linguistic skills in the child:

The child acquires these skills before he becomes aware of them. The child’s awareness of what he talks *about*—the things out there to which the language refers—normally take precedence over his awareness of what he talks *with*—the words that he uses. And he becomes aware of what he talks with—the actual words—before he is at all aware of the rules which determine their sequencing—the rules which control his own production of them (Indeed, a thoughtful adult has a very limited awareness of such processes in his own mind.) (pp. 87–88)

It would seem that this is likely to be the case with TEYL, too.

Thinking about the age of the learners, in terms of when might be a “best” or optimal time for children to learn a new language, it now seems as though there may not be such a thing (Aitchison, 2003). Lenneburg’s critical period hypothesis suggests that there is a critical period, up to about 11 years of age, and this hypothesis has often been quoted as the reason for starting the teaching of languages to younger and younger children (Aitchison, 2003). However, this hypothesis has now been heavily criticised, and instead, it seems that if the learner is predisposed or motivated to learn language, whatever their age, child or adult, then he or she will be able to learn other languages (Aitchison, 2003). By deduction, then, it would seem that there is no “best” age at which children should start learning other languages. However, the movement for teaching languages to children has well and truly been established worldwide,

and this is not likely to stop in the foreseeable future. Perhaps, though, there are other good reasons for introducing foreign languages to young learners, rather than because there is an organic cutoff point for language learning. We consider these later in this chapter.

Thinking back to individuals making sense of the world around them, we also need to consider here the theories that learners use preferred learning styles to learn, which are linked to the main sensory receivers (Revell & Norman, 1997). On the whole, this thinking tends to see learners as using their preferred visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic learning styles, although there is also a case for the use of olfactory and gustatory learning styles (Reid, 1995; Revell & Norman, 1997). This notion of each person learning in his own way has also become strongly linked, more recently, with the work of Gardner (1983, 1993), as he proposed that there are different types of *intelligences* that we all have at our disposal and which we individually use in different ways for different activities, and his work has been gaining huge popularity in educational communities around the world. Gardner set out to show that there was not just a psychometric view of intelligence and that the subsequent testing of intelligence in one particular form was not a sensible way to evaluate what learners were really able to do (Gardner, 1983, 1993). Initially, Gardner felt there were seven such multiple intelligences—logical-mathematical (the one usually tested in traditional examinations), linguistic, spatial, kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal—but in his later work, it seems there may be even more than these, including naturalistic and, possibly, existential (Gardner, 1993).

So, How Do We Think Children Learn a Foreign Language?

Added to this, it is worth considering here the interesting suggestion by Cummins (1979a, 1979b) that there are two types of language that can be taught: basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Cummins tried to show how conversational fluency is often acquired by nonnative speakers in ESL classes, equivalent to their grade level, within around two years, whereas academic-type language, for talking about subjects at an academic level, often takes around five years by the same learners. His work is significant in showing us how a lack of understanding of the latter time scale issues has led to misjudged assessment of learners wrongly viewed as able to leave the language support classes when there was still a lot of language

learning to be done. So, by way of a review, if our present understanding of how children learn is that they learn to think, understand, question, and try to make sense of the world (and for our case, language) around them best when they have the functionality, guidance, learning environment, and cognitive and social support of an adult who creates a scaffolded learning environment and takes part in zones of proximal development with the learners and inputs language at the BICS level before the CALP level and then combines them, this approach is likely to be the most applicable in a TEYL context.

In addition to this, we also need to help learners understand why they are learning, what they are learning, and how, as Cunningham and Cunningham (2002) rightly state, “children need cognitive clarity about what they are learning” (p. 88). So, we must remember that teaching is not a secretive activity, and the more we inform our learners about why they are involved in the activities we create for them, the more they will make sense of them, understand and enjoy them, and—when given the right scaffolding—will develop, grow, and learn more through this understanding. As Williams (2002) also states,

General guidelines for teachers that derive from the research evidence... include the suggestions that teachers help students by explaining fully what it is they are teaching—what to do, why, how, and when; by modeling their own thinking processes; by encouraging students to ask questions and discuss possible answers among themselves; and by keeping students engaged in their reading by means of providing tasks that demand active involvement. (p. 256)

The TEYL teacher should also be able to model target-language learning and use and create interesting, meaningful, and purposeful situations in the target language, so that through this, the children will acquire the target language in a natural way (Bruner & Haste, 1987; Donaldson, 1978; Hughes, 2002, 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, if we believe that we should support the child by appealing to their preferred learning styles and multiple intelligences, then this should also be reflected in our TEYL approach and methodology.

Why Teach a Foreign Language to Young Learners?

It is clear why we would teach English as a second or additional language in an English-speaking country, but why do we teach English, or any other language, as a foreign language to young children at primary

school age? As outlined previously, we have heard the “youngest is best” mantra for some time now, but there is still little evidence to show that this is the real reason for TEYL. It has been found that young learners do not actually learn quicker or easier, and there does not now seem to be a critical period for learning a language (Aitchison, 2003; Cameron, 2001). Instead of thinking about an optimum age for learning here, when the evidence is too unclear at the moment to make any long-term decisions about early or later language learning, we should instead think about the environment for learning in the primary school and the reasons for teaching other subjects to young learners.

Language Learning as Another Subject in the Primary Curriculum

Why do we teach young learners anything? If we think now that first language is not quite totally acquired by around the age of 5, as Cameron (2001) and Aitchison (2003) both suggest, should we not wait until the learners are more mature, able to read and write in the first language, and have more cognitive agility before teaching them a new language? Perhaps, though, we ought to ask yet another question here, which is, why do we teach *anything* to such young learners? Why introduce them to science, maths, history, music, or any of the other subjects they are exposed to in primary school (Hughes, 2001)?

Traditionally, and this happens globally, we introduce a range of different subjects to young learners in their first school. Nobody thinks that they may be “too young” to start being introduced to these subjects or that these subjects should be introduced as pure or abstract subjects. Instead, these subjects are introduced to children in order for them to make sense of things that are part of the interesting world that surrounds them and that are to do with them and their lives. As educators, we believe that we are initially building the foundations of understanding in each subject in a very practical, hands-on way so that young children can interact with the “actual”, “physical”, and “here and now” of these subjects and may not even be aware that they are learning about maths, history, science, or music. They are learning about these subjects in concrete and practical ways that we believe link with their cognitive development at these ages. Ideally, we are supporting this by scaffolding their learning, creating a meaningful, dynamic, and functional learning environment, with the teacher as mentor and modeller of the thinking that is being introduced to the learners, and creating development of learners and their understanding of these subjects through zones of proximal development. For

example, we teach the sort of maths that has a meaning to these learners but which deals with addition, subtraction, fractions, and multiplication of things that are important to them (e.g., addition of teddies and dolls together, what the taking away of building blocks leaves them with, how cutting a cake can be described in fractions, how they can work out how many pieces of cake they need for the class; Hughes, 2001).

This should also, then, be the case with language learning. As Rixon (1999) succinctly puts it, we are looking for optimal conditions for learning rather than optimal age. Teaching about language at this age will also enable us to scaffold young learners' thinking and understanding of language and communication in general and their own language and other languages through zones of proximal development in particular. Thus, we are laying the foundations for understanding of themselves, other peoples and cultures, and particularly, communication, which will be so very important for them in their futures.

The teaching of a foreign, or new, language should show children how this new language can have a link with their everyday lives, introduce them to the idea that it is positive to speak another language, and communicate more easily in a world in which they can interact with now and in which, in the future, they may travel and work. TEYL teachers, then, must act as language and thinking modellers of this other language, just as primary teachers need to act as modellers of all subjects and thinking that young learners are being introduced to in their primary education.

As Read (2003) echoes,

Primary schools generally provide an ideal context for a whole learning experience appropriately structured to meet children's needs. Through 'learning by doing', language competence can be built up gradually and naturally and provide the basis for more abstract, formal learning in secondary school. After all, no one ever suggests postponing the age of starting to learn maths because it will be easy to catch up later. (p. 6)

What of the Target-Language Learning Then?

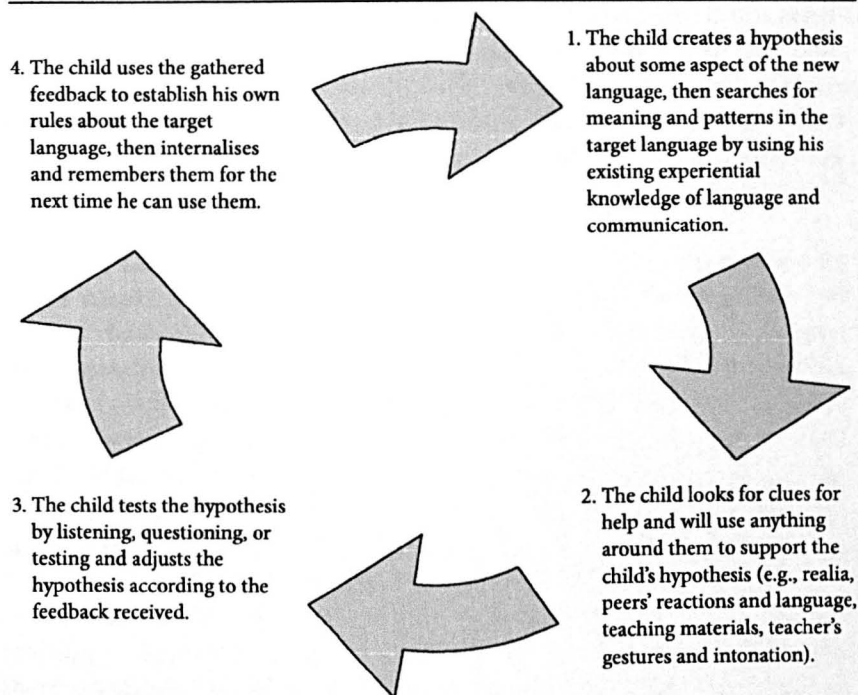
First and foremost, the structure of the target language is not the first thing we want the young learners to focus on. Instead, we want it to be just a small part, initially, of what is being taught and introduced to them. We are introducing them to communication, sharing ideas and knowledge, working together, having fun with the sounds of the new language, and using this new language to interact with each other in a fun and motivating way.

At the same time, though, TEYL teachers have to make sure that there is a sound linguistic syllabus, as well as a syllabus focusing on the social, metalinguistic, and cognitive language learning that is going on. The child does not need to focus only on the language as a subject in the early stages of language teaching. Initially, we want them to just communicate and interact in and with the target language. We can also introduce them to enough simple metalanguage so that they can talk about the new language in easy ways, just as we would use simple mathematical metalanguage to help children talk about what they are doing in maths (e.g., *big, small, add, take away, split up*). So, some aspects of talking about the language should be introduced to younger learners for, as Cameron (2001) suggests, even very young learners are able to talk about some aspects of language (e.g., action words). As Garvie (1990) also recommends, “The handling of the tools must become second-nature to the handler” as they acquire more and more language (p. 56). Although, perhaps, we could also add here that the handling of all of the metalinguistic tools do not need to become second nature until we are sure that these learners are ready to use this level of CALP language in the target language.

It is only when children have the initial ability to communicate and use the target language as a tool (or science and maths as tools) that we can then expect them to start identifying and itemising parts of the language and its rules. It is fitting here to remind ourselves what Donaldson (1978) said about the child acquiring skills before he is aware of them. Activities in the young learner language class should be cognitively challenging and developmental for our learners, just as all teaching at this level should be. A language level just slightly beyond learners’ present stage of understanding will encourage and interest them in the target activity more than if they are continually faced with activities that are too linguistically or cognitively easy for them (Krashen, 1981). It is really important that our young learners find a challenge in any learning activities in order that they may learn, gain a feeling of success, and perhaps more important, learn how to learn and think (Cameron, 2001; Hughes, 2010).

Therefore, we need to create a classroom in which the child is able to hypothesise about the language, consciously or subconsciously. In other words, as they are experiencing the new language (e.g., like the new maths, science, and music), they are constantly involved in a cycle of hypothesizing as they learn (see Figure 13.2).

Figure 13.2. The Language Learning Hypothesizing Cycle for Young Learners



Note. Adapted from "Why Should We Make Activities for Young Language Learners Meaningful and Purposeful?" by A. Hughes, 2010, in F. Mishan & A. Chambers (Eds.), *Perspectives on Language Learning Materials Development* (p. 180), Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.

Teaching of Reading in TEYL

It is at this point, and given our understanding of the context described previously for TEYL and our pedagogic understanding of it, that we can now turn to discussing the teaching of reading within English language teaching for young learners. As Rixon (2007) rightly comments,

Reading as a skill very often is *not* addressed in any depth, either in national syllabuses or in EYL teaching materials on which much of the onus of teacher support and development is placed in many parts of the world.... This lack of attention to how reading skills might best be launched with [young learners] contrasts greatly with the often furious debate about the most effective procedures for handling them with native speaking children. (p. 6)

Aitchison (2003) has described what she calls a *sensitive period* in which the children are naturally tuned in to acquiring language. Should we, in TEYL, try to link the teaching of reading in English to this sensitive period for our young language learners so that they can use, consciously or subconsciously, some of the strategies and cognitive skills they are using for first-language acquisition and reading? As Aitchison states, “Children acquire the main grammatical rules of their language between the ages of around two to five”, with a “final phase of grammar” coming “between five and ten” (pp. 4–5).

Then, according to Aitchison (2003), at around 5, children have an active vocabulary of around 3,000 words with a passive vocabulary of around 10,000 words, after which there is a further huge leap in vocabulary acquisition at around age 13. However, Cameron (2001) states that young second-language learners add around 1,000 words in English a year to their vocabulary but that, in the first place, there is a gap of about 4,000–5,000 words between them and their native speaker peer group. Cameron also indicates that children in a foreign-language learning situation, rather than a second-language learning one, only acquire around 1,000–2,000 English words after five years of regular TEYL lessons.

This focus on vocabulary at this stage of our discussion about how reading is taught to young language learners is important, as it seems there is a strong link between the size of the lexicon and the link with the grammar of the language (Cameron, 2001). “Much important grammatical information is tied into words, and learning words can take students a long way into grammar” (Cameron, 2001, p. 72). And as Aitchison (2003) mentions, “word learning is interleaved with other dimensions of language learning, though continues long after other aspects of acquisition are complete” (p. 11). She additionally states that 20,000 words, usually acquired by native English speakers at around 13 years of age,

seems to be a critical mass for being able to speak English fluently. Foreign learners who had reached this total could talk efficiently about any subject...and those with less than this number often struggled both to understand and to talk fluently. (p. 5)

Should TEYL be focusing more on vocabulary acquisition during the primary school age to try and give young learners this “critical mass” of 20,000 words over the long term in their EYL learning, which can then interleave so crucially with the grammar of English? If this is the case, this may be problematic, for we are aware that children are in TEYL

classes for so little time, and it would be difficult to make up this time and amount of vocabulary. As we can see, the picture regarding hours of TEYL input is different all over the world, as information from Rixon's (2000) survey shows in Table 13.1.

Cameron (2001) relieves our worries about time and catch-up, however, when she describes what she believes is the optimum amount of words derived from the most frequently used vocabulary in written texts as 2,000 words. She suggests that vocabulary teaching in TEYL might be focused on these 2,000 words to give the learners a working lexicon in English. However, these are the words used most frequently in written texts, accounting for around 80% of the written texts in English according to Cameron, which raises concerns about focusing on the teaching of vocabulary linked only to a corpus created from the written word. Might it make fluency in the target language even more difficult to attain for our young learners, if there is a focus only on the most frequently used words in written texts? More research is needed here to clarify the situation.

Rixon (2007) raises other concerns for our young language learners in terms of the complexity of English words they may be coming into contact with and their understanding of them. She feels this is additionally compounded by the fact that many English learners, whilst possibly also learning to read in first language at the same time, are trying to apply some of the concepts they are using in first-language reading for reading in English, but if they are learning to read with totally different writing systems, this may be confusing for them. She also says that children "may need to make quite a conceptual leap when moving to an alphabetical system such as English" (p. 6). She further illustrates how the "multitudinous relationship between symbols and sounds that English permits" make it difficult to acquire English easily (p. 7).

Cameron (2001) also reminds us how it is not just knowing the word that is important to young English learners but also the knowing about it (i.e., word knowledge) in all senses that is crucial, including receptive, productive, phonological, decoding, orthographic, grammatical, pragmatic, style or register, collocation, and metalinguistic knowledges of the word. Cameron neatly shows these different aspects of word knowledge in Table 13.2. However, if we believe that vocabulary acquisition is so vital in TEYL learning to read, we may now be about to hit a brick wall. We want to support language learning and long-term fluency for our young learners, but we cannot rely on the written word to build their English vocabulary base, or teach them all aspects of every English word

Table 13.1. Information Regarding Timing of Teaching English to Young Learners in 42 Countries or Regions, 2005–2006

Country or region	Timing of instruction
Argentina	72 hours per year
Austria	1 hour per week
Bahrain	5 hours per week, 32 weeks per year
Bangladesh	<i>Years 1 and 2</i> ; 44 hours per year <i>Years 3 and 4</i> ; 82 hours per year
Brazil	2–5 hours per week
Colombia	45 minutes per day, 3 days per week
Croatia	<i>Years 1–4</i> ; 70–170 hours per year <i>Years 5–8</i> ; 105 hours per year
Cyprus	40 minutes per day, 3 days per week, 30–35 weeks per year
Czech Republic	40 minutes per day, 3 days per week, 33 weeks per year
Ecuador	No information
Ethiopia	45–55 minutes per day
France	15 minutes per day, 4 days per week
Greece	80 hours per year
Hong Kong	8–9 lessons per week, totalling about 180–210 hours per year
Hungary	1, 2, or 3 hours per week, 35 weeks per year, totalling 35–105 hours per year
Iceland	40 minutes per day, two days per week
India–Goa	35 minutes per day, 5 days per week
India–Gujarat	30 minutes per day, 4–6 days per week, 20 weeks per year, totalling about 40–60 hours per year
India–Maharashtra	30 minutes per week, 5 days per week, 32 weeks per year, totalling 80 hours per year
India–West Bengal	40 minutes per day, 5 days per week
Indonesia	90 minutes in one lesson per week
Israel	<i>Grade 3</i> ; 2 hours per week <i>Grade 4</i> ; 2–3 hours per week <i>Grades 5 and 6</i> ; 3–4 hours per week
Korea	40 minutes per day, 2 days per week, 34 weeks per year
Latvia	40 minutes per day, 3 days per week
Malaysia	30 minutes per session, 8 sessions per week
Mexico	50 minutes per day, 3 days per week, 40 weeks per year
The Netherlands	100 hours during primary schooling, whenever school wants to deliver it
Pakistan	35 minutes per day, 6 days per week, 33 weeks per year
Poland	240 hours spread over grades 4–6
Romania	50 minutes per day, 2 days per week, 28 weeks per year 50 minutes per day, 3 days per week, 28 weeks per year
Russia	<i>Grade 1</i> ; 60 lessons per year <i>Grades 2–4</i> ; 96 lessons per year
Slovenia	1–2 hours per week, totalling 30–70 lessons per year
South Africa	No information

(continued)

Table 13.1. Information Regarding Timing of Teaching English to Young Learners in 42 Countries or Regions, 2005–2006 (continued)

Country or region	Timing of instruction
Spain	Ages 8–12; 1 hour per day, 3 days per week, 30 weeks per year
Sri Lanka	Grade 3; 30 minutes per day, 5 days per week, totalling 80 hours per year Grade 4; 40 minutes per day, 5 days per week, totalling 140 hours per year
Sudan	Forms 5 and 6; 3 hours per week, 30 weeks per year
Taiwan	48 hours per year
Tunisia	No information
Turkey	Grades 4 and 5; 2 hours per week, 36 weeks per year Grades 6 and above; 3 hours per week, 36 weeks per year
Ukraine	Years 1 and 2; 3 hours per week, totalling 100 hours per year Years 3 and 4; 4 hours per week, totalling 130 hours per year
United Arab Emirates	40 minutes per day, 4 days per week
Venezuela	4 hours per week

Note. Adapted from *Worldwide Survey of Primary ELT* by S. Rixon, 2000b, London: British Council, retrieved December 15, 2010, from www.britishcouncil.org/worldwide_survey_of_primary_elt.pdf

they may be learning in the TEYL classroom for a number of reasons, which include the following:

1. The lack of understanding of these issues by TEYL teachers and a lack of specific TEYL training in the teaching of reading in particular
2. The overall approach taken locally in TEYL and the teaching of reading in the target language
3. The lack of extended time for the first school English lessons and the lack of opportunity to input the amount of TEYL acquisition that would equate to approximately five years of a child's native-language acquisition of language
4. The background writing system the child may be learning in the first language
5. Whether the child has been introduced to reading and writing in the first language at all before starting reading in the target language
6. The materials used to support TEYL locally and whether they support reading
7. The way literacy is viewed in the first-language culture

Table 13.2. Knowing About a Word

Type of knowledge	What is involved	Example
Receptive knowledge: Aural/decoding	To understand it when it is spoken/written	
Memory	To recall it when needed	
Conceptual knowledge	To use it with the correct meaning	Not confusing <i>protractor</i> with <i>compasses</i>
Knowledge of the spoken form: Phonological knowledge	To hear the word and to pronounce it acceptably, on its own, and in phrases and sentences	To hear and produce the endings of the verb forms, such as the /n/ sound at the end of <i>undertaken</i>
Grammatical knowledge	To use it in a grammatically accurate way; to know grammatical connections with other words	<i>She sang very well</i> not <i>*she sang very good</i> ; to know that <i>is</i> and <i>be</i> are parts of the same verb
Collocational knowledge	To know which other words can be used with it	<i>A beautiful view</i> not <i>*a good-looking view</i>
Orthographic knowledge	To spell it correctly	<i>Protractor</i> not <i>*protracter</i>
Pragmatic knowledge, knowledge of style and register	To use it in the right situation	<i>Would you like a drink?</i> is more appropriate in a formal or semi-formal situation than <i>what can I get you?</i>
Connotational knowledge	To know its positive and negative associations, to know its associations with related words	To know that <i>slim</i> has positive connotations, when used about a person, whereas <i>skinny</i> is negative
Metalinguistic knowledge	To know explicitly about the word, e.g., its grammatical properties	To know that <i>protractor</i> is a <i>noun</i> ; to know that <i>pro</i> is a <i>prefix</i>

Note. Modified from *Teaching Languages to Young Learners* (p. 77), by L. Cameron, 2001, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

*Indicates nongrammatically correct language

The first of these, the level of understanding, awareness, and training of TEYL teachers is, as discussed previously, one of the crucial variables. Center (2009) echoes these findings when she reports that during classroom observations or through conversations with teachers, they would tell her “that their preservice training has not equipped them to assist struggling readers satisfactorily” (p. 6). In Rixon’s (2010) survey results, carried out amongst TEYL teachers from 2005 to 2006, she notes that some teachers of TEYL often had a negative experience when learning English as a target language themselves, and many of them had carried out little reading in English other than set texts or university handouts.

The majority of teachers in the survey reported they had had a “look and say” approach to reading themselves as learners, rather than a phonics or blended approach, and it seemed that a minority of these teachers focused on consonant cluster rather than syllable-initial consonants in reading development, which is particularly pertinent to teaching reading in English. In particular, her findings noted that 33% of the respondents who did not specialise in young learners had never heard of phonics, half of the nonspecialists had heard of phonics, and the rest were not sure what it was, although 90% of the young learner specialists had at least heard of it. However, when the young learner specialists were asked if they could explain it, this rate dropped dramatically.

What seems to be clear from Rixon’s (2010) survey, like Center’s (2009) findings, is that not many TEYL teachers seem to have had training in the teaching of reading in TEYL, and others are confused about what different aspects of teaching reading are and, perhaps, even what different aspects of TEYL are. Fox (2000) mentions his own concerns about this knowledge of TEYL when carrying out some action research in Hong Kong when he identified a

dilemma between what I believe was the best way to help support my learners and the way most teachers and parents thought about ESL. Indeed, following a series of informal meetings and discussions, it appeared that there was little consensus amongst teachers, parents and, perhaps most importantly, the students as to what ESL was all about. (p. 36)

This lack of understanding on the part of some TEYL teachers is also mentioned by Olsen (2000) when she comments about the teaching of English in Norway:

There are great regional differences...One of the reasons is the lack of qualified English teachers... In some cases, the children learn more English outside the classroom than inside it, because they receive too little input in the language at school. (p. 45)

Olsen goes on to say that English is now being taught in Norwegian schools from the first day of their schooling, but due to the way teachers are trained to become English teachers, many of them do not seem to have knowledge of a sound TEYL methodology, and “teachers lack confidence to use the language themselves and rely in all their work on the textbook with the accompanying teachers’ guide” (pp. 45–46).

Reading in First Versus Second or Foreign Language

What seems to be crucially important for learning to read in first language is the way language surrounds the learner and, importantly, that this is happening for a long time before the teaching of reading is started in a formalised way. The importance, then, of such approaches to literacy and literary activities in TEYL is made very clear and something we next consider in more detail (Au, 2002; Cameron, 2001).

There is a wealth of literacy surrounding native speaker children of any language as they grow up and before they even get into a formal classroom. There are labels and street signs, food packets, labelled boxes and storage, newspapers and magazines, letters and cards in post, writing on toys and children's books, shop signs and things in shop windows, as well as, of course, the computer screen, which their family may be interacting with and which they are certainly looking at over their family members' shoulders. For first-language users, there are many years of indirect input, creating a rich language literacy and many years of exposure before formal teaching of reading in first language, which impacts remarkably on their ability to recognise particular words, sounds, and symbols when they start the formal process of learning to read in first language (Rixon, 2010).

TEYL learners do not have such an extended time within a rich English literacy environment, so when they come to learning to read in English, there is a huge gap of knowledge which often the TEYL teacher is unaware of. TEYL practitioners, then, must try to create a rich TEYL literacy environment for their learners within the language classroom to try and fill some of this gap and make up for lost time. (We look at some practical ways of doing this later in the chapter.)

Yet, as Rixon (2007) found out, few TEYL teachers are trained to teach reading in the target language or are even aware of the need to create a rich English literacy in their language classrooms. If there is training and development for these teachers, it tends to focus on the development of their own confidence and abilities in English, which is similar to the situation Olsen (2000) described. Also, as Rixon mentions, often these teachers never experienced being taught another language as young learners themselves and so have no experiential memory of what it feels like to learn to read in a new language. Rixon reminds us that

Reading as a skill very often is not addressed in any depth, either in national syllabuses or in EYL teaching materials on which much of the onus of teacher support and development is placed in many parts of the world. The need to recruit or prepare new teachers of EYL often outstrips the capacity to give them a full orientation to the professional skills they will need...Issues such as the development of initial reading do not usually form part of this basis training. (p. 6)

Many of these EFL teachers are also not involved in the teaching of reading in their language learners' first language, so it could be that they are unaware of how to deal with reading in the first language, let alone the target language. However, as we are aware, the use of the written script in the target language is generally highly obvious in the materials teachers use, either formal materials created by publishers and often including children's workbooks, activity books, writing books, readers, ancillary materials, and so on, as well as teacher- and school-made materials.

As Cameron (2001) notes, "It is important to begin with, and to keep returning to the idea of reading and writing as language use for expressing and sharing meanings between people" (p. 123). She particularly emphasises the fact that literacy is both social and cognitive. "Socially, literacy provides people with opportunities to share meanings across space and time. Cognitively, literacy requires that individuals use specific skills and knowledge about how the written language operates by processing text" (p. 123).

If we expect our young language learners to be able to address both social and cognitive literacy in the target language without any protracted length of English literacy input, without a rich English literacy environment in the language classroom, and without them being made aware of or adept in their first-language skills of reading and writing and how their first language literacy skills may be different from or similar to the target language literacy, then we are doing our language learners a great injustice. Too often, this is exactly what is happening in the TEYL classrooms. Instead, teachers need to create a rich English literacy environment in the TEYL classroom by giving much rich, intensive exposure to the target language, which learners can interact with as much as possible during their language classes.

What is also important is that these learners are also scaffolded through their reading in the target language, baby step by baby step, when very young (up to around age 7 or 8 months) and small step by small step at a time when they are slightly older (until around age 10 or

11) to have a chance of mastering abilities and skills of reading in English. To do this, teachers have to create the right environment in the language class so that a great many English words and text types around them are available for the young learners to experience. Learners may be having to learn a whole host of new skills and strategies, in terms of reading in English, compared with those that they may be using in their first-language reading, depending on the literacy culture, script, and approach to reading in their first language.

Learners will be consciously or subconsciously trying to apply and hypothesise whatever they have learnt in first-language reading skills to the English words or texts they are being introduced to. Teachers need to be aware, though, that these may not be so appropriate, depending on the script of their first language and the graphophonemic relationships they encounter in their first-language script.

Like the grammar issues in language teaching we feel that if we could just explain the rules, learning could be made much more efficient but, on the other hand, explaining the rules gets so technical that most children cannot understand the explanations...What we can say is that English is a complicated alphabetic written language, and almost always requires learners of it as a foreign language to develop new skills and knowledge, in addition to what can be transferred. (Cameron, 2001, p. 133)

As Rixon (2007) reports,

Children coming from contexts in which their L1 uses a very different writing system, particularly a logographic system (such as Chinese) or a syllabic system (e.g. Sinhala) may need to make quite a conceptual leap when moving to an alphabetical system such as English. Children whose languages are written alphabetically like English but which do not use the Roman alphabet (e.g. Greek, Russian, Arabic) will also have adjustments to make. Less obviously, children whose languages share an alphabet with English (e.g. Spanish, Italian, German) may find the different sound values given to seemingly familiar letters frustrating. (pp. 6–7)

What the language teacher has to do is create as many opportunities as possible to support the learners' emerging and growing literacy in English in order to scaffold their learning of reading in English. The teacher needs to create plenty of opportunities for their young learners to interact with and use this new target language in the TEYL classroom in an informal, fun way and use it for the learners to carry out meaningful

and purposeful social activities, for example, getting information on something they are keen to find out about, such as an event in the area; sharing their likes and dislikes in a survey; and seeing what the local or premier football results are (some practical examples are provided later in the chapter).

By interacting through and with English in such an environment, it is likely that the learners will come to feel comfortable and confident using the target language. Hopefully, they will then be motivated to use it, rather than demotivated or frustrated and confused, and will thus be more likely to acquire and recall it more readily. If learners are exposed to a great variety of examples of English in the language class environment, and if this is rich and varied, it should engender a more stress-free learning environment and long-term, meaningful acquisition of literacy and language in English for them (Hughes, 2010, 2011). As Rixon (2007) points out,

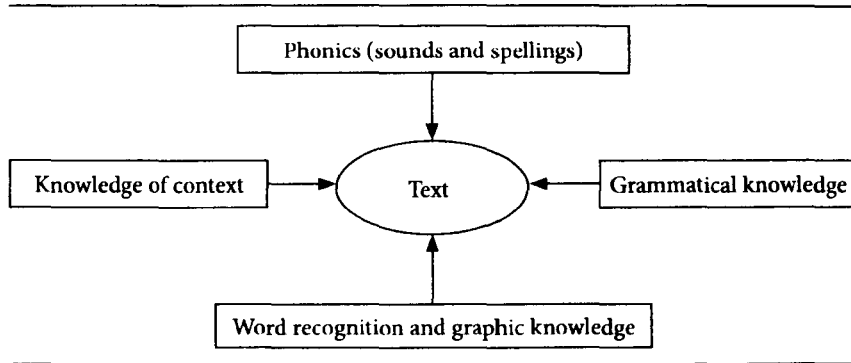
if [young learners] can within a few years become confident and happy readers of real texts in English, the road to autonomy and enjoyment of the language is made that much clearer for them....this will not happen automatically; teachers need to know how to give [young learners] a happy and well staged start on that road, beginning with the very first steps. (p. 6)

Meaning or Word Level of Reading

When considering the mechanics of teaching reading, Center (2009) suggests that pupils need to be taught skills at both the “meaning...and word level”, and further states, “put simply, reading is the product of decoding (word recognition) and comprehension (both listening and reading)” (p. 6). She then lists the U.S. National Reading Panel’s five essential components of beginning reading instruction as “phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency—which can all be classified as word-level skills—and vocabulary and comprehension—which come under the rubric of meaning-level skills” (p. 6). Martin, Lovat, and Purnell (2004, p. 17) illustrate the process of reading being overarched by the learner’s need to link all these skills when trying to make meaning when reading, as illustrated in Figure 13.3. The reader approaches reading using all of the skills at the same time to make sense of the words they are reading.

Added to these views, of course, is the continuously raging debate of the phonics versus whole-word approach in reading in first language, let alone in a target language. Rixon (2007) points out the difficulty young

Figure 13.3. Making Meaning



learners have with the transparency of English and its spelling and linked sounds when she notes,

It is this mix of transparent versus variously tricky written forms in the English language that contributes to the debates amongst L1 reading experts concerning the effectiveness of phonics-based learning versus whole-word learning. In other words, English is a language in which it is not easy or straightforward to gain mastery in processing and understanding the written words, even for native speaker beginners. To this, we need to add the fundamental disadvantage at which Young Learners find themselves. Native speaker children have a large orally-learned data bank of language upon which they can draw when trying to match not-very-transparent symbols with meaningful language, but Young [language] Learners do not have this. (pp. 7–8)

Thus, Rixon highlights, once again, the need to create an English-literacy environment for our young language learners, which will go some way to helping them create their own data bank of the language to draw on when trying to make meaning as they read in English. (We discuss this further in the next section.)

Thinking about the specifics of the teaching of reading in TEYL for learners who can read in first language, though, it would seem that Calderón (2009) also thinks a focus on vocabulary growth is important for these learners. She described the work carried out in the School 319 project in New York, where the “extensive explicit vocabulary instruction became the basis of EAL success in these schools” (p. 14), which was not just in language lessons, as she further mentions, “There were also

non-EAL pupils who were struggling readers because their word knowledge was limited. Teachers reported that teaching rich vocabulary and reading integrated into maths, science and social studies helped all pupils perform better” (p. 14). She particularly notes,

a recent report from the US National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth found that the components necessary for successful reading comprehension for mainstream pupils also become the building blocks for EAL language and literacy development: phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge and comprehension. However, the panel found the EAL pupils, need more explicit instruction and more time for comprehension. (p. 14)

It would seem valuable to list here some adapted instruction approaches used in this project, as outlined by Calderón (2009), as these may be useful for TEYL teachers to reflect on:

- Teach important words before reading, not after;
- Teach as many words as possible before, during and after reading;
- Teach simple everyday words [BICS]...along with information processing words,...and content specific/academic words [CALP];
- New words must be used within the context of reading, talking and writing within the same class period...;
- Lexical items (e.g., tense, root, affixes, phrasal and idiomatic uses) should be emphasized and used as strategic learning tools;
- Teach...pupils keywords for a reading assignment...;
- Avoid sending...pupils to look up words in the dictionary. This doesn't help; and
- Avoid having a peer translate for...pupils—this doesn't help either.

With explicit vocabulary instructions for...pupils became a seven-step process:

1. Teacher says and shows the word and asks pupils to repeat three times;
2. Teacher reads and shows the word in a sentence (context) from the text;
3. Teacher provides definition(s);
4. Teacher explains meaning with pupil-friendly definitions or gives an example that pupils can relate to;

5. Teacher engages 100% of the pupils in ways to orally use the word and concept (e.g., turn to your partner and share how...; Which do you prefer...? Answer in a complete sentence..). Writing the word, drawing, or other word activities should come after reading. Before reading, pupils need to use the work orally several times in a variety of ways;
6. Teacher ends by highlighting an aspect of the word that might create difficulty: spelling, multiple meanings, cognates/false cognates, prefixes, suffixes, base words, synonyms, antonyms, homophones, grammatical variations etc.... Steps 1–6 move quickly, with no more than 10–15 minutes spent in pre-teaching key vocabulary; and
7. Teacher assigns peer reading with oral and written summarization activities, and further word study where...pupils can practise applying the new words. (adapted slightly from Calderon, 2009, p. 15)

Given the discussion so far, it would seem that a balanced approach to teaching of reading is necessary for our young language learners, which specifically includes support for making meaning in their reading, a balanced approach to both phonics and whole-word approaches, and a need to create a rich target-language literacy environment, or data bank, for them in the language classroom.

How Can We Create the Right English Literacy Environment?

How, then, in practical terms, can we create an English-literacy environment in the classroom? We can do several things, such as making the classroom represent a micro-English environment in which English language, in many different forms, in many different presentations, and for a variety of uses, is employed in the language classroom and with which the learners interact (Hughes, 2011). These forms should include the following:

- Labelling everything in the classroom in English
- Creating interactive English posters that will encourage learners to read and use them (e.g., a daily weather chart, an updated football poster with information about results of football matches)
- Having interactive games and quizzes in English in the classroom for learners to play or take part in when there are a few minutes spare either before, during, or after a lesson

- An English book/reading/story corner or an area in the classroom that includes a wide variety of reading material in a wide variety of different genres that is freely available for the learners to interact with
- Written instructions in English for using items in the classroom created both by the teacher and the learners (e.g., for filling in or interacting with the interactive posters, completing quizzes, how to use English games, how to use new software, how to borrow books from the English book library/corner)
- An English “sound” corner (If the learners have particular difficulties with any aspect of English pronunciation, such as between *v* and *b*, or *th* and *ph*, then an area with labelled pictures or real examples of things starting with these sounds will give practical, meaningful opportunities for practise and repetition.)
- English-language posters that show a range of things that would be helpful for everyday English use, such as useful phrases or words in English, lists of words (e.g., days of the week, months of the year, descriptive words, action words, colours), and examples of poems or chants containing alliterative language
- Posting news announcements about children in the class on the walls
- Hanging “Class rules for...” posters in English, in which you and the class have negotiated rules for behaviour in the class and during lessons, such as “Class rules for speaking and listening” (e.g., “When someone is speaking, listen and do not interrupt”)
- A listening corner where students can listen to English audio or video recordings (e.g., stories, jokes, songs, adverts from British television, films, cartoons, instructions)
- A writing corner where students can create English stories, books, quizzes, and posters by themselves
- A survey corner/area where the teacher or students create surveys and ask students to complete them on a regular basis, then the findings are discussed with the whole class

Above all, the quality of the language environment lies in the small changes and additions made regularly and the inclusion of new materials that change on a rolling and regular basis, so that learners are motivated to read and interact with these new things they see every time they come

into the language classroom (Hughes, 2011). As Wells (2009) notes, there is a “strong relationship between knowledge of literacy at age 5 and all later assessments of school achievements” (p. 166), and this must also be the case in target-language acquisition and reading. In particular, teachers should make sure that there is plenty of real interaction with English for the learners in order to support and scaffold their emergent literacy in English. Teachers can do this by creating opportunities in the classroom, like those outlined previously, and also by using a wealth of stories books, and real books with young language learners. The term *real books* here includes any books, comics, reference books, and literature that have been specially written for young readers, though not necessarily young language learners. However, there will also be space for books and materials that have been published for young language learners (i.e., created language materials), such as the sort of readers published by ELT (English language teaching) publishers (Hughes & Williams, 2000). Yet again, a balanced approach here with real and created books in TEYL will enhance the literacy environment for our language learners.

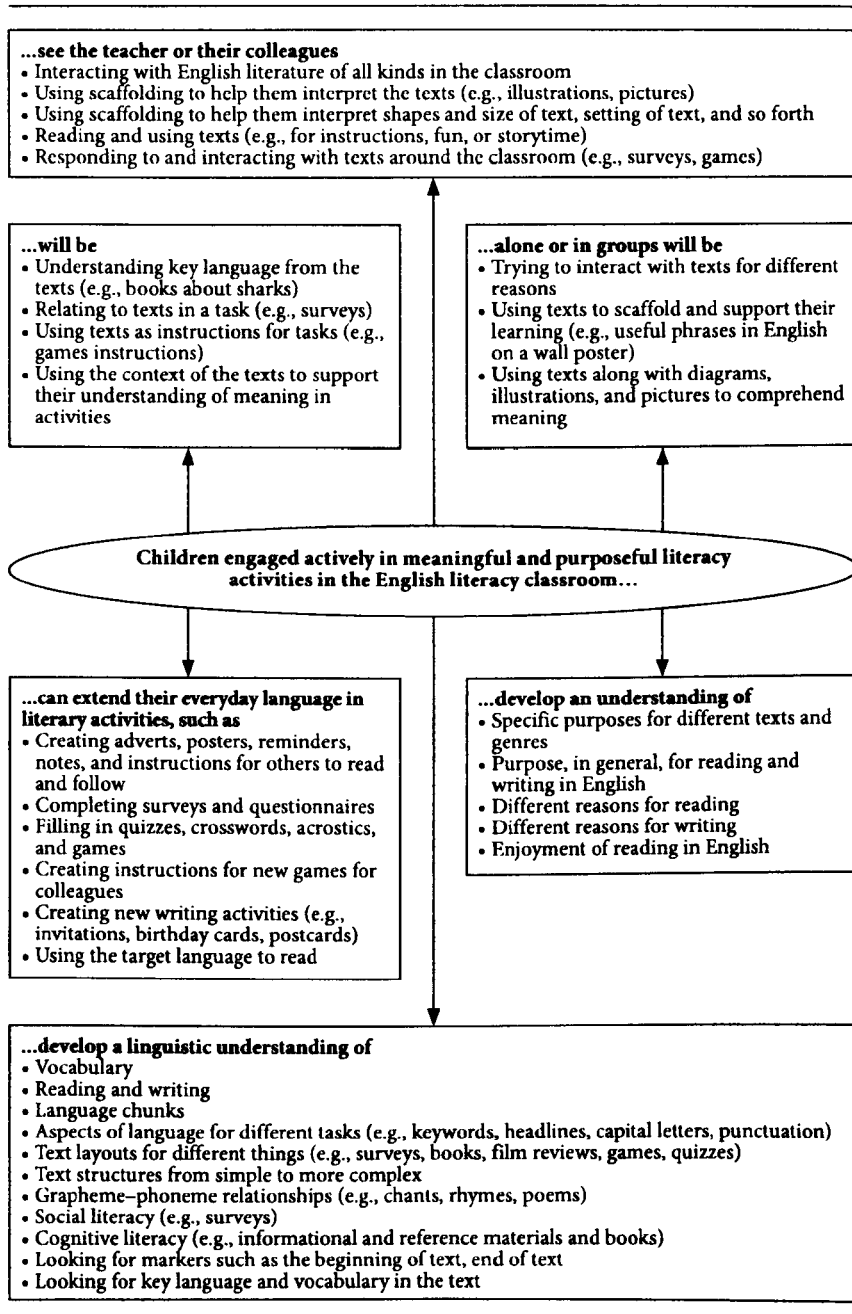
By using this wide range of reading materials in the classroom, learners will come to feel comfortable with the written word in English, will start to see patterns emerging in this written form, will start to link oral language with written language, and will see, through the use of language around the classroom and in stories and books, that reading English can be enjoyable, fun, fascinating, and good to do and thus will be motivated to try to read. Figure 13.4 gives an overview of what has been discussed so far on this.

The Importance of Story in TEYL

Once we have created a rich English literacy environment in the TEYL classroom and are using real and created literacy, we must also think seriously about the importance and use of story in TEYL. Just take a moment to think about the conversations you have had today. What did they consist of? Reflect on them carefully, and I think you will find that they are all based on story (e.g., “I just got stuck in a terrible traffic jam coming today”; “We went to the new store at the weekend, and it was a disappointment”; “We went camping in the woods for our last holiday”; “I had a terrible dream last night about...”).

Because we are sophisticated adults, we tend to forget that, actually, a huge amount of what we talk about is really story based, as are the television programmes we watch and even the news stories we read. Story is

Figure 13.4. Children Engaged Actively in Meaningful and Purposeful Activities in English



central to communication and language. If this is so central to language use, we must teach our young language learners about story. This means helping them listen to story, understand stories, tell stories, and raise their awareness and interaction with stories and the beginning, middle, and end of stories (Hughes, 2006b, 2010). Klippel (2006) also believes in the centrality of story, as she states,

stories...are the bread and butter of our modern media, of TV and the popular press, of conversations between friends and strangers. We all tell stories all the time, in the shape of accounts of what happened to us or of what we think might happen, little narratives taken from the constantly flowing river of our lives. (p. 86)

She also suggests that there are three things that are necessary to reap the harvest of an encompassing literacy education through books:

1. Excellent picture books which are linguistically accessible to the learners and make it easy for them to start creating new worlds in the foreign language.
2. Enthusiastic and competent teachers who can bring the books alive and create a memorable experience of listening, understanding and talking about books.
3. School curricula which reflect a less technical attitude to language learning while at the same time providing enough freedom for each teacher to take her class on storytelling adventure trips to the English language. (p. 89)

In addition, two particularly powerful aspects of story in TEYL are that it contextualises new target language, leading to more understanding and meaningful acquisition of the new language for the young language learner, plus it encourages the listener/reader to predict what is going to happen next in the story. This prediction process can help our learners focus on their own English lexicon and language corpus to predict what is going to happen next, process the language in each next part, and try to make sense of the story as they listen or read (Hughes, 2006a, 2006b, 2010, 2011).

Garvie (1990), too, is convinced of the value of story in TEYL:

I see story as being helpful in all varieties of the EFL situation. It helps to contextualise the items of the syllabus/course, offering a field of learning which is meaningful, interesting and motivating, while at the same time it covers the English work that has to be done. It can also give cohesion

to the work. Above all it brings a more informal, lively and communicative component to what at times can be a highly structured and often tedious programme. The structure would still be there but so would the other side of the language equation, giving the balance of the eclectic approach. (p. 12)

As Brewster and Ellis (2002) also highlight, “EFL Teachers of young learners are now more familiar with an acquisition-based methodology, and recognize the true value of using storybooks and the technique of storytelling as a way to create an acquisition-rich environment and ideal learning conditions” (p. 1).

Additionally, our pedagogical responsibility as TEYL teachers should be such that we are aware that we need to be teaching our young learners about things in general through the target language, and the use of stories in TEYL is one excellent way of doing this. As Garvie (1990) additionally points out,

Story in its widest sense is also the carrier of life’s messages and has, I believe, a vital part to play in the education of the young child, particularly in the development of language. I suppose that the teacher, working from a story ‘bank’ rich in all manner of literary genres and crossing a variety of cultures, can produce the kind of learning environment which not only stimulates and carries the children along on the crest of their interest and enjoyment, but offers meaning potential without which the learning of the language is rigid. (p. 56)

We must not forget here, though, that stories can have a magical quality for the listener/reader in the lesson and, as such, are a very powerful resource for our language classrooms. As Martin, Lovat, and Purnell (2004) illustrate when they describe reading a story to children,

At the really dramatic moments children’s concentration can almost be felt in the room as their eyes stare at us and their breath is held... The appeal is basic...How do we ensure that all children experience the power of story? How do we then best utilise this power as a way into children learning? (p. 49)

Yet, what are children doing when they are processing stories, as they listen to teachers telling them, showing pictures that support the stories, or watching the teacher telling a story? Basically, a lot! As a quick overview shows, they are

- Listening to, following, and making sense of the story or book
- Understanding the key language being used
- Linking the language to the pictures, illustrations, and gestures they can see
- Linking the language with the actions in the story or book
- Using the pictures and gestures as support for language and language comprehension
- Following the story's or book's structure and stages
- Listening to and looking for story and book markers
- Listening out for the story's stages (Garvie, 1990)
- Visualising the situation in the story or book
- Making sense of the new things in the story or book as they are contextualised
- Making associations

How, then, can language teachers scaffold and support the language learners as they interact with stories? They must do the following:

- Allow the learners plenty of *thinking time* (Hughes, 2006a, 2006b, 2010)
- Create space gaps when reading or telling to allow for this thinking time before moving on
- Use a variety of approaches to cater for the range of intelligences and learner types
- Give learners lots of examples of books and stories to physically interact with
- Support all aspects of each book or story to allow for greater comprehension
- Scaffold learning constantly throughout the interaction with the story or book
- Encourage the learners to tell what is in the story or book by telling it back
- Extend the learners' interaction with the story or book by using meaningful and purposeful follow-up activities
- Use realia and props to make the reading or listening memorable

Young learners are using the same cognitive tools to process the story or book in the target language as they would in first language, so they are using and extending their cognitive skills in a variety of ways to support their language learning as well as their understanding of things in general. This is also described by Latham (2002) when she suggests,

The ability to listen to and comprehend stories, and to reproduce or produce them, does have a facilitative effect on cognitive processes, and upon personal development, too....understanding of narrative involves very complex mental activity, and children who engage in listening to or reading stories on a wide scale are greatly enlarging their strategies for grasping meaning, their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and their imaginations. (p. 152)

We must not only encourage our language learners to listen to stories but also to try and tell stories and take part in tell-back (Bruner, 1986) activities with stories and books in order for them to use the target language we are introducing, consolidating, or practising in each particular story. Children can tell back by

- Retelling the story
- Retelling the story using pictures, puppets, or props
- Drawing a picture to capture the story or information
- Drawing a storyboard for the book or story
- Dramatising the story or information
- Dramatising key characters from the story or book
- Dramatising the beginning, middle, or end of a story in groups and putting the three together
- Working in groups with one narrator using story markers and others acting as characters or manipulating puppets, using dialogue from the story
- Creating and using story markers and keywords to create a story (Hughes, 2006b, 2010)

It is through story listening, telling, and reading that young language learners can develop an amazing understanding of many aspects of the target language and thus be further motivated to try to read these stories, in all their forms, in English for themselves. This will further enhance their reading skills and give them more reasons to make meaning through

reading. It will also enhance their understanding of different aspects of reading and, eventually, writing in English, including the following:

- Sentence structure
- Story structure
- Organisation of texts
- Language used in different situations
- Language used with different audiences
- Use of vocabulary in a variety of contexts
- Use of language chunks
- Where to use story markers and signposts
- Keyword use
- The value of repetition to create drama
- Linking of illustration with context
- Dialogues, narrative, and onomatopoeic words
- Process writing (e.g., tell-back, their own story creation)
- Focused language use on particular aspects of language, such as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, connectors, and contractions (Hughes, 2006b, 2010)

When it comes to thinking about the right linguistic level for the language learners, there are several different ways of addressing this. A balanced use of well adapted and written ELT books for young learners (i.e., created materials) can be used (e.g., Penguin Young Readers series, Mary Glasgow Magazine's Popcorn readers series, Usborne Publishing's ELT readers for young learners) as well as real books and materials. Stories can be adapted when the teacher tells or reads them to the class in order for the learners to be able to access the meaning and see the use of illustrations, intonation, repetition, realia, and gestures by the teacher, which will, in turn, help learners comprehend, repeat, or tell back the story.

However, it is interesting to note the findings of research carried out on the use of story in Spain by Cabrera and Martinez (2001). When they made interactional adjustments (e.g., repetition, gestures, comprehension checks) to stories they told, the young learners were able to follow and understand. However, when only linguistic adjustments to the story were made, they found that the young learners could not follow the story. So, it seems it is important to make sure that all the interaction aspects

of storytelling, such as repetition, use of gestures, and comprehension checks, are present when telling stories. Similarly, in an action research carried out by Hatta (2005) in Japan, as he looked at whether nonlinguistic support and the limited use of the mother tongue could facilitate comprehension of a story in EFL for 10-year-old Japanese learners of English, he found that the learners

could possibly make intelligent guesses as to what the story is all about and what will happen next, if they are supported by visual aids like illustrations, the storyteller's skills of telling stories, or by a limited and controlled use of the mother tongue. (p. 48)

Angelil (2000) carried out action research into the TEYL teacher's reading of stories and the use of multimedia in storytelling for 6-year-olds in Switzerland and found that children who heard the teacher reading the story seemed to be emotionally involved with the story and able to reproduce clusters of words and to use more expression in tell-back. However, when another group of learners only listened to the same story from an audio recording, they did not show any emotional involvement with the story and had more difficulty reproducing key phrases from it. Angelil's findings also link to the point made by Martin, Lovat, and Purnell (2004):

Children...need to see...short stories from which they may derive ideas and models. In fact, explicit teaching needs to be centred on this type of very short story, since this is the sort of story children are often encouraged to write...If we take the reading-writing connections seriously, we know that children will need to explore how authors achieve effects in very short stories if they are encouraged to generalise from these reading experiences! (p. 208)

Interestingly, in a rather dramatic piece of research by Olsen (2000) in Norway, all the TEYL textbooks of 9–10-year-olds were replaced by children's books—rather similar to an approach to reading and literacy strategies of the “Book Floods” used in New Zealand, Fiji, England, and Finland for native speaker children (p. 47). Her results after using the real books rather than textbooks showed that

learners have increased their vocabulary, and that they have become readers of English, some even quite fluent readers. The most obvious result, which cannot be measured in an ordinary test, is that of increased

motivation. This is clear from talking to children, teachers and parents.
(p. 52)

All of these real books tend to have in common the most wonderful use of illustration and design, which can particularly aid and support the child's comprehension of the story as well as appeal to those visual learners in our classes. Additionally, our young learners can hold and touch the books. Children's books are so often good enough to "eat", as publisher Peter Usborne put it during a presentation at the Realbooks Seminar at the University of York in 2006, and this great attractiveness can really motivate our learners to turn the page and want to read the text.

Arizpe (2006), also highlights the importance of visuals in books for deep understanding for young learners, when she discusses results from the Reading Pictures project at the University of Cambridge, which set out to explore how visual texts were read by children. She concluded, "it was the children who had had the most access to picture books and other visual media rather than the best textual 'decoders' who were able to reach deeper levels of meaning" (p. 46). This further shows us the importance of a rich English literacy in the classroom rather than a focus only on the form of the language in TEYL. Additionally, we know that native speaker children love revisiting the same stories and books again and again, which aids their development in language use and reading. This is also the case with young language learners, and we are very much aware that repetition supports and scaffolds learning in the target language.

Ponterotto (2001) seems quite adamant about the use of story in TEYL when she says,

A psycholinguistic stance in primary L2 points to the validity of an organically constructed narrative mode as a facilitator of language development.... Most significantly, it permits the maximal use of repetition which is constitutive of the structure of language and the nature of its acquisition. In its combination with rhyme and metrical patterns, repetition is particularly suitable to children of primary school age, especially in the context of second language learning. (p. 71)

We must support the understanding of the story and the key language, vocabulary, and phrases in each story, and we must do this in a number of ways so that we reach all sorts of learner and intelligence types within the class. We can do this by using techniques such as emphasizing intonation, mime, gestures, props, dramatic voices, and emphasis of

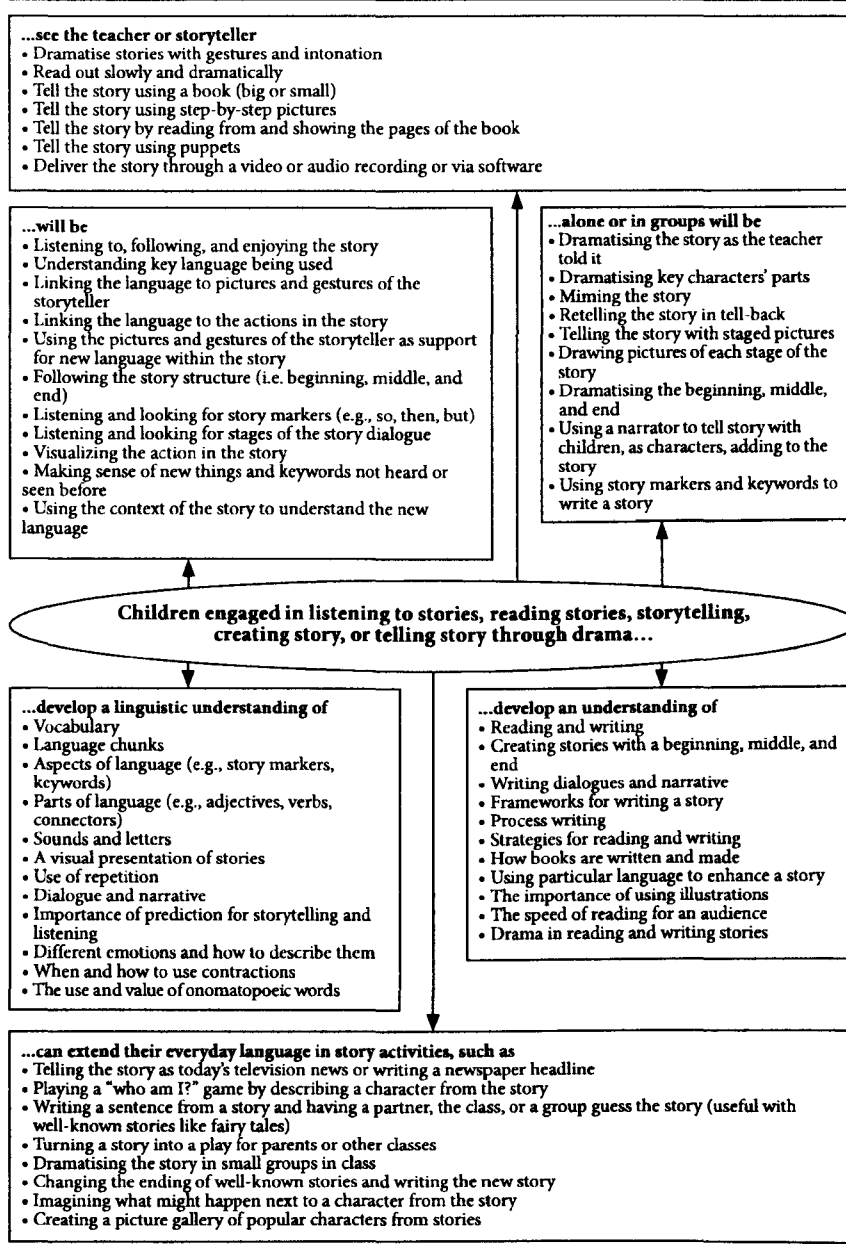
keywords and story markers, visuals, and texts to present the story and make it as comprehensible and engaging as possible for each young language learner.

To this end, we must also give lots of examples of different types of stories in different forms in the language class, real books, created books, picture stories, magazines, comics, props for a story, and big class books. Our objective should be that after much input, in terms of stories and activities linked to stories, we can encourage the learners to tell and write their own stories using the techniques we have modelled, such as use of intonation, story markers, and keywords (Hughes, 2006a, 2006b, 2010). As Garvie (1990) states, “Good stories can engage children’s imagination by their rich, authentic, meaningful uses of the foreign language” (p. 159). Figure 13.5 shows an overview of what is happening in TEYL learners’ heads when they are engaged in listening to stories, reading stories, storytelling, creating story, or telling story through drama.

In conclusion, this chapter has tried to show what is happening in the field of TEYL for our younger and younger language learners. As first outlined, it is rather complex and not easy for TEYL teachers, with little or no training in the teaching of reading, to create the most supportive classroom environment for the teaching of reading in the target language. If we are to be successful in teaching young language learners to read in the target language, we need to think about how best to support them, scaffold them, and create opportunities for plenty of zones of proximal development to take place within the rich English literacy environment of the language classroom, which will help young language learners comprehend and enjoy interacting in and with English texts and, ultimately, reading in English.

We should be aware that not all cultural literacies are the same and make sure that we support English literacy and the teaching of English words, sounds, letters, and spelling in the TEYL class in a balanced way to scaffold our learners’ development in the target-language reading. With the addition of plenty of interactive reading opportunities, catering for different learner types and interests in our classes, plus the central use of many different reading materials, stories, and books, we will go a long way to creating a successful, motivating, and enriching experience for these language learners. As mentioned, there is very little research in the teaching of reading with young English language learners as foreign language learners, and as concerned professionals, we must address this huge gap in our knowledge and understanding of what is really going on in English language classes around the world in the very near future.

Figure 13.5. What Is Going On in Children's Heads When Using Story in Teaching English to Young Learners



Note. Adapted from "The all-round use of real stories and authentic books in teaching English to young learners," by A. Hughes, (2006a), in L. Farago & G. Ambrus (Eds.), *Reading is for everyone: Publication of IATEFL-Hungary young learners special interest group* (pp. 5–9).

Questions for Reflection

1. Is reading instruction in TEYL different from reading instruction in the first language? If so, why? Can you highlight what would be the most important points to remember when either (a) teaching young language learners how to read in the target language or (b) training teachers to teach reading in TEYL classrooms?
2. What are the challenges facing TEYL teachers when it comes to reading, and how can these be addressed, physically and practically, in the language classroom? What strategies can those involved in TEYL use to overcome these challenges?
3. In what ways can a teacher involved in TEYL create a rich literacy environment for their classroom, and what lesson activities could be linked to the English literacy provided in the TEYL environment?

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Action Research in TEYL: Reflections on the global picture from 1996-2010

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Introduction

This chapter presents a review of Action Research (AR) projects that have been carried out by students as part of the Master of Arts in Teaching English to Young Learners (MA in TEYL), delivered by the Department of Education, University of York, to TEYL professionals globally. Action Research in this context is practitioner research which is carried out alongside normal day-to-day professional practice which introduces and measures the results of small changes in that practice within a series of cycles. The ‘students’ on the MA in TEYL are, in fact, qualified and experienced teachers, curriculum developers, materials writers and publishers who view the MA in TEYL studies as continuing professional development in the field, with many of them holding senior roles within their schools, institutions, ministries or companies.

The MA in TEYL has been running since 1997 and consequently, during this time, a huge number of AR projects has been carried out by our students, covering a broad range of research areas. The AR project within the MA is an important part of the programme and is valued by students as an important piece of professional development.

The involvement of practising teachers in small-scale classroom research is seen as vital to pedagogical practice, as it not only aids professional development but also enhances understanding of teaching and learning. It was as professional development, particularly, that this small-scale piece of research was included on the MA in TEYL. Additionally, the role of AR was felt to link immediately with TEYL classroom situations and the opportunity to equip students with skills for using and developing AR in their own daily practice. Wallace (1994:4) approves of this aspect of professional development in AR when he describes it as:

A strategy, basically a way of reflecting on one’s teaching done by systematically collecting data

on everyday practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decisions about what future practice should be.

Not only can teachers measure something that is happening in a classroom, but they can also take action and measure the effects this action has on teaching and learning, continuing with these ‘cycles’ of research / action until they feel satisfied with the outcome for the learners, for themselves and their practice.

As Wallace (1998:44) also states:

Illuminative or heuristic research is much more feasible for practicing professionals: gaining insights into one’s own teaching or discovering something about oneself as a professional that one didn’t know before is the very essence of action research.

Background

In the past 14 years, the tutorial team has noticed that many students see the AR projects as a very valuable learning opportunity, even when their research findings are not particularly conclusive. The opportunity to take a pedagogical microscope to something that is happening in their own classrooms is commented on very favourably by them as a very powerful way to understand what is *really* going on in terms of teaching or learning in their context.

As Hughes (2006: 15) describes, there are numerous reasons for TEYL practitioners to set up action research projects in their classrooms, including:

To gain further understanding of how materials or activities are really working, or not working, with these learners,

To gain further understanding of how young English learners are interacting with the teaching, activities or materials we use with them,

To identify and attempt to correct a perceived classroom problem,

To create, deliver and measure a new aspect of TEYL being used, whether it be different materials, methodology or resources,

To fill the gap in the area of practitioner TEYL research,

To facilitate a professional development reflective cycle.

In this review a random sample of 75 AR projects has been taken from the hundreds of projects that have been carried out on the programme between 1997 and 2010. It will be looking at certain aspects of these AR projects that are felt to help enlighten a) future students b) academic staff c) programme writers and d) other academics and teachers involved in either carrying out classroom-based action research or supporting those who are doing so.

In particular, the review will be looking at the *methodology focus* within the AR reports, the *problems* and *patterns* emerging from them and what, if any, impact the carrying out of these projects has had on the students' *professional development*. (For the purposes of clarity MA in TEYL students will be called 'teacher-researchers' in the rest of the chapter, until the final section, in order not to confuse them with the AR project descriptions of pupils/students).

Having carried out a smaller random sample review of AR projects in 2006, Hughes (2006) found a clear and valuable picture of some of the patterns, problems and passions emerging. The results of this earlier review have subsequently been informative for all those teacher-researchers about to start AR projects. This input has been found to be extremely valuable. In the same way, we hope this present chapter will not only be used by us but also by other academics and teachers to inform, support, and warn those about to carry out action research.

The Global Picture of TEYL

Given that the AR projects being reviewed have been carried out by teacher-researchers in up to 60 countries, it was felt to be useful to try and review, briefly, the global context of TEYL in order for the review results to be considered against this background.

This section tries to set the scene for TEYL globally and, specifically AR. However, the setting of the global scene is a difficult task as there is no such thing as a 'typical TEYL classroom' to be found anywhere in the world! The variables connected to TEYL are shown in Figure 1.

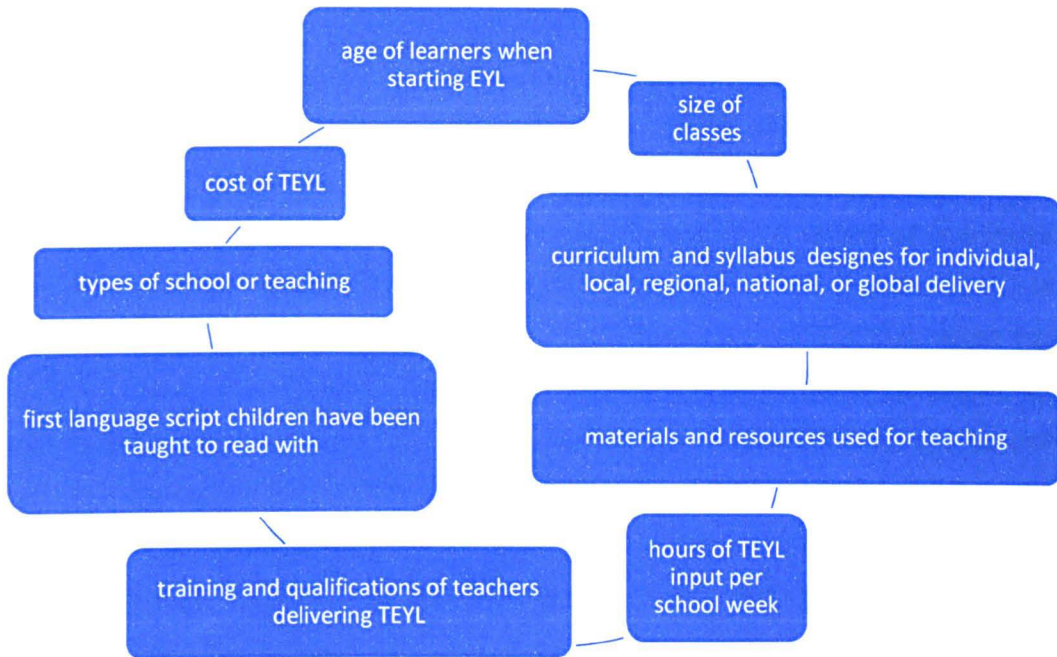


Figure 1: The variables involved in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) (adapted from Hughes 2011)

Thus, as one cannot describe a typical view of the TEYL class or teacher, it may be helpful at this stage of the chapter, to note some of the many global variables that exist in EYL, as illustrated in Figure 1 above. Figure 1 also shows that there are at least nine variables when trying to consider the global picture of TEYL. One of these is the huge variation in numbers of children in TEYL classes. Classes range from one-to-one and small-group tuition right through to those with 60–70 plus children in some schools (be they private or state school). There is no typical age at which the teaching of English starts globally; this depends on regional or national edicts, and funding. The teaching methodologies, syllabuses, and materials used in the different deliveries of TEYL are often not standardized in any way, even from class to class. The teaching and learning may, or may not, be structured or evaluated, and the English-language knowledge of the children can vary greatly.

Another variable is the training, qualifications and professional development of the teachers involved in delivering TEYL, though in recent years a much more professional approach has been made to the training and support of these teachers in many countries.

As is to be expected, the picture of TEYL varies greatly from country to country and region to region. For example, in some areas it is quite normal for TEYL to be introduced to learners as young as three or four, whilst in others, it is only introduced at secondary school

age. Additionally, for some years in some countries TEYL has been the prerogative of private language schools, rather than centrally part of the national curriculum. Excitingly, in Rixon's (2000) global survey of TEYL provision across 42 countries, she found that TEYL was now taking place in 32 countries in state primary schools within a national curriculum.

Up until very recently, only a handful of countries had TEYL as part of their curriculum. However, in many countries, also illustrated by Rixon's (2000) results, TEYL is more formally seen as part of the national primary curriculum. In some countries, where provision of TEYL is not government supported, many parents send their children to private language schools for English. Globally, this teaching, in state or private schools, can be extremely varied in quality and outcome, in teacher knowledge, qualifications and training and in the suitability of the syllabuses.

Linked to the curriculum or syllabus objectives, of course, is the number of hours of TEYL delivery. The two may not always match well, with problems occurring. Rixon (2000) found that the range from country to country of TEYL teaching was anything between 30 minutes per week to a staggering 50-100% of the week's teaching input.

Assessment of learning (and teaching) in TEYL is also extremely varied from country to country. In some countries no formal assessment is carried out at all, whilst in others there is formal TEYL assessment on a weekly basis, and everything in between these two extremes exists! The Council of Europe validates junior versions of the language portfolio so that there can be a record of children's language learning and development. Often these need to be very different from country to country, as in the case of Eire and Norway, both seemingly adapting a junior portfolio for particular national needs.

To sum up, the amount and quality of English being learned by young learners, depends on their starting age, the hours of input, the level of expertise of their teachers, the syllabus, the amount of TEYL provision, the amount and quality of teacher training in TEYL and any learning objectives, outlined for each class. The 75 AR projects we have analyzed need to be seen against this background of vast global and national TEYL variables.

The Study - TEYL Action Research over the last 14 years

A random sample of 75 AR projects carried out worldwide over the last fourteen years was made. A number of different aspects of these AR projects were analyzed, with the aim of determining emerging trends in methodology and focus from a global perspective.

Whilst AR projects from sixty countries have been carried out in the past fourteen years by students on the MA in TEYL, this random sample of AR projects under analysis spanned thirty different countries. Each continent except Antarctica was represented in this study. Of the 75 projects examined, 39 were studies carried out in Asia, whilst a further 28 were carried out in Europe, with South America, Africa, Australia and countries in the Middle East also represented.

There was a wide range of focus areas throughout the AR projects, and many practitioners investigated more than one specific area within their projects. These were recorded carefully and categorized into 18 broad focus areas. For instance, an AR project that focused on the possible effect that using different reading strategies might have on students' motivation and metacognitive awareness, was noted as focusing on reading, metacognition and motivation.

The focus areas for the random sample of 75 AR projects are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of general areas of focus areas for 75 MA in TEYL AR projects

Focus Area	Number of Projects
Reading	17
Scaffolding techniques	15
Motivation & affective factors	13
Speaking skills	11
Metacognition	10
Vocabulary	9
Writing	8
The Use of Story	7
Grammar	5
Pronunciation	5
Language Games	4
Learning Styles	4
Learning Strategies	3
Role play / song	3
Gender	3
Technology	3
Classroom management	3
L1 Interference	2

As Table 1 shows, there has been a significant interest in the development of reading skills among young learners during the last 14 years, with many of the projects focusing on specific reading skill areas, such as inference, prediction, and retelling. Scaffolding skills, which is a relatively broad category, has been another popular area of focus, with teacher-researchers examining areas such as the influence of gesture, graphics and classroom displays on various aspects of language acquisition and production. Other scaffolding skills in this category included peer mentoring, collaborative group work, questioning techniques, instructional language and feedback techniques.

Surprisingly, the use of technology in TEYL has not been investigated perhaps as much as might have expected. This may be due to a large number of reasons, including limited technological resources, limited technical know-how and curriculum constraints. It will be interesting to see if this becomes an increasing area of focus among teacher-researchers in the future, and if the overall balance of focus changes over time.

Figure 2 bands the students within these AR projects into broad age brackets and shows the breakdown of age focus for the 75 AR projects under analysis:

Age range

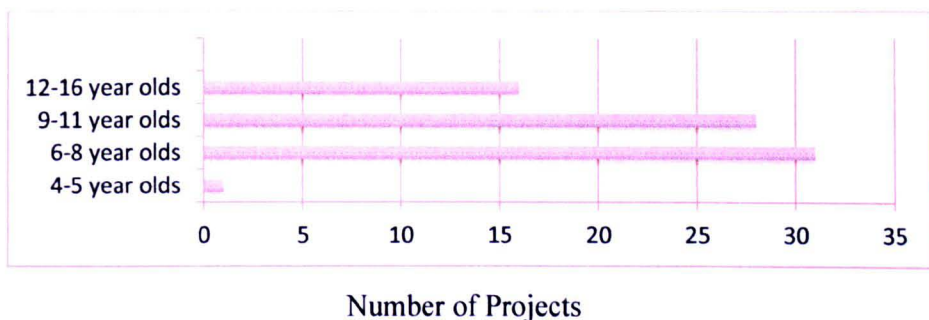


Figure 2: Number of projects per age group across sample of 75 MA in TEYL AR projects

Of the various groups of students with whom the teacher-researchers chose to work for their AR projects, the most popular age range was 6-8 year olds (32 projects), while the second most common age group was 9-11 year olds (28 projects). Only one teacher-researcher in this sample chose to focus on very young learners in the 4-5 year old age group, whilst 16 studies were focused on adolescent learners (12-16 year olds).

One teacher-researcher in the sample had a dual age focus, drawing on both 6-7 year old students and 10-11 year old students in a piece of action research which aimed to investigate the impact that using reading buddies can have on younger students' motivation for reading.

Number of cycles

The average number of cycles in the AR projects analyzed, not including the collection of baseline data, was four, whilst the mode (i.e. the most frequently occurring number of cycles) was three. Teacher-researchers often mentioned time constraints, manageability of data and consistency in student attendance as being factors in their decisions about how many cycles to include in their AR projects. A large number of the action researchers indicated the desire to go on and add further cycles to their AR projects once they had finished gathering and analyzing their data, in an attempt to arrive at more conclusive results.

Number of Projects

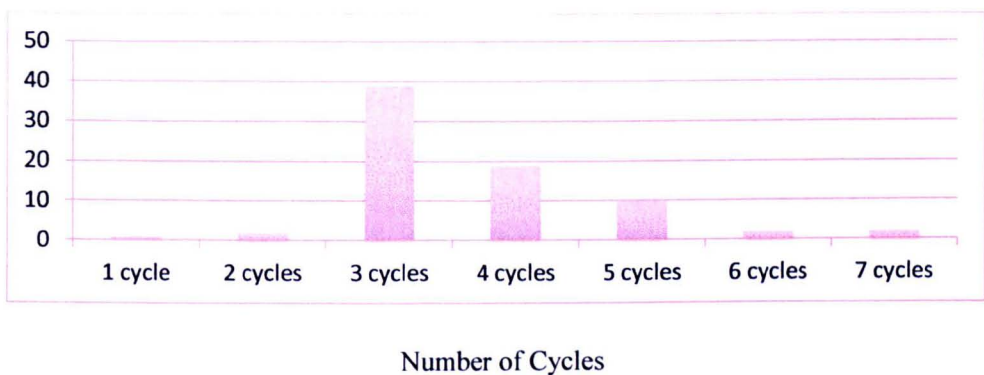


Figure 3: The frequency of occurrence of 1-7 cycles across 75 sample MA in TEYL projects

Methods of data collection

Conscious of the need to triangulate their data by collecting data from a number of different sources, almost all of the teacher-researchers involved in the study used at least three methods of data collection, with some using as many as seven.

The most popular method of data collection by far was student questionnaires, which were used in 55 of the projects. Their popularity was due to the fact that student questionnaires can yield both quantitative and qualitative data. AR journals also proved to be a popular data collection tool used by the teacher-researchers to note down their thoughts, ideas, questions and observations. However, although 43 teacher-researchers mentioned that they used an action research journal during their project, only a small number presented actual data from these journals in their final AR reports. Classroom observation was another commonly used

method of collecting data used in thirty-three of the projects, and perhaps surprisingly, thirty of the teacher-researchers used student assessment as a means of collecting data.

In contrast, only a small number of teacher-researchers involved students' parents or guardians in their data collection processes and only two used e-mail correspondence with students as a source of data for their action research. It will be interesting to see whether electronic communication, such as e-mails and blogs, becomes more commonly used as data collection tools for AR in the future.

Time spent on the AR projects

Each of the 75 AR projects was examined with a view to finding out how much time each project typically took the teacher-researchers to carry out. Of the 75 reports, the longest took 52 weeks whilst the shortest took just two days. Sixty-eight of the projects (90%) took the teacher-researchers four weeks or more to carry out, whilst forty of them (53%) took at least eight weeks. A total of twenty-three (30%) of all the AR projects lasted more than four months, whilst only four (5%) took fewer than two weeks.

Sharing results

Teaching can be a very isolating profession, and in the field of teaching English to young learners there seems to be a distinct lack of published research specifically related to children's language learning. Hopkins (1994) stresses the importance of the reciprocal sharing of AR insights and findings, whether informally among colleagues, or formally through public forums, such as educational conferences and journals, as a way of encouraging development and growth among teaching professionals.

The sample of AR projects was analyzed to find out how many teacher-researchers mentioned that they intended to share, or had already shared, their findings from their action research with their colleagues or other stakeholders. Twenty-two teacher-researchers specifically mentioned that they would or had shared their findings with colleagues, whilst the majority did not highlight or mention the sharing of results.

Conclusiveness of results

Many practitioners find that action research often raises more questions than it answers. This would seem to be a reflection of the sheer complexity of the teaching and learning process, with its many interrelated facets, influences and factors, rather than a criticism of action research itself. Of the 75 samples analyzed, 41 of the teacher-researchers felt that their

findings, whilst illuminative, could not be considered conclusive. The other 34 teacher-researchers felt that their findings were conclusive to varying degrees, but most commented that there were too few cycles and too many possible influencing factors to achieve totally conclusive results. Nonetheless, almost all of the teacher-researchers commented in their AR reports that they found that the process of carrying out action research led to a deeper knowledge and understanding of their own teaching practices, their students and their teaching contexts.

Problems and solutions

Each of the projects was scrutinized for mention of problems that arose for the teacher-researcher. Problems of some kind were mentioned in 43 reports (57%). These were noted in the general discussion of methodology, in the discussion of ethical issues, or in the overall evaluation of the project.

Many of the reports highlighted more than one problem. The total number of problems across the 43 reports that included mention of them was 132. We recorded these one by one to find a total of 45 different types of problem, ranging from those relating to time, to those relating to the general design of the projects. We collated these problems into the seven categories listed in Figure 4.

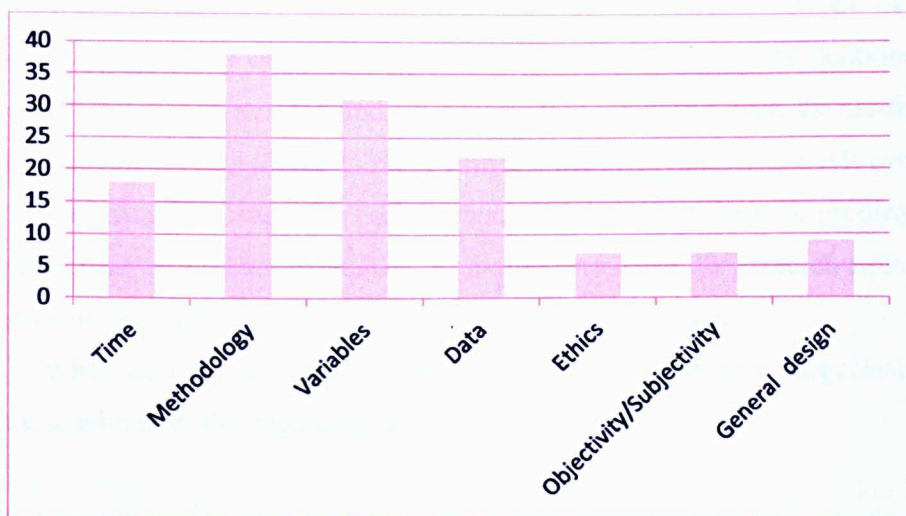


Figure 4: The number of responses per category of problem

Translated into percentages, this shows that those problems concerning methodology were the most frequent, with 28.8% of the problems mentioned being in this category. Of the 38 problems raised, ten of them related to the limited size of the sample group and its

consequent effect on the reliability of the data. Other problems in this area included intrusive data collection methods, misinterpretation or confusion of questions asked.

The second most frequent problem observed (23%) was that of variables. Ten reports mentioned that unexpected events such as H1N1 flu outbreaks, disrupted the AR cycles! Other problems in this category included students dropping out or being absent, new students joining the group, motivation levels of learners dropping across the AR cycles or familiarity with data collection procedures affecting the reliability of the data.

The third most frequent problem area (16.7%) was that relating to the data themselves. The most common problem relating to data was that of gathering data that were found to be extraneous or irrelevant to the research question, something which ten reports highlighted. A further eight reports considered their data not to be entirely accurate, for one reason or another. Other reports mentioned problems such as the difficulty of classifying data, gathering too much data or finding that data were incomplete.

The fourth most frequent source of problems was that of time. In fact, lack of time in itself, was the most frequently noted single problem, with eleven reports mentioning this. When grouped into a category, 13.6% related to time in one way or another, including shortage of time, choice of time consuming data collection methods, changes in circumstances that cut time short, and AR cycles that ended up being too short.

The fifth category included problems in the general design of the AR projects. Approximately 7% of the reports referred to these. Four reports mentioned that the scope of their project was too big and others reported problems such as needing a clearer focus, difficulty in finding a class to work with and not including enough AR cycles.

The final two categories each accounted for 5.2% of the total problems. These related to ethical issues, such as difficulties in gaining permission for research and/or filming, stress on students and lack of objectivity on the part of the researcher.

When analyzed as single problems (i.e. not grouped into categories) the most frequent, those with over five mentions, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of reports out of 75 that mentioned specific individual problems

Problem	Number of reports	Percentage
Lack of time	11	8%
Small sample group affecting reliability of data.	10	7.5%
Unexpected events (flu outbreaks, family events, participant holidays etc.).	10	7.5%
Data collected were not as useful as	9	6.8%

expected/did not address the AR question fully/were extraneous to the AR.		
Data collected were judged to be inaccurate.	8	6%

It is important to note at this point that all of the reports analyzed were related to successful and completed AR projects. Even those teacher-researchers who mentioned several problems were able to, at best, find ways round these and, at worst, take them into account when evaluating the project, commenting on the effect they may have had on the results. This would suggest that problems should be seen as part and parcel of research and that they should be taken in one's stride as a challenge rather than an obstacle to successful research. Indeed, a number of the teacher-researchers in question included in their reports pointers for overcoming similar problems were they to carry out further research. A number of teacher-researchers mentioned that triangulation of data had proved invaluable in ironing out inaccuracies in data or in cross-checking where data were incomplete or perhaps not as valid and reliable as hoped. In relation to this, another researcher mentioned that it would have been very useful to involve an external observer in their project for the sake of gaining another, perhaps more objective, viewpoint. Also in relation to this, one researcher stated how important it was to include a mix of qualitative and quantitative data, which in combination she felt to be more reliable. Several teacher-researchers mentioned the fact that problems such as technical pitfalls and inaccurate data collection methods might be avoided through prior trialling or piloting of projects of methodology. As regards the ethical problems encountered, one researcher suggested that carrying out a needs analysis with learners might be a way of ensuring that a research project is truly relevant to the context, thereby pre-empting potential resistance on the part of institutions or participants.

It was interesting to see that few of the teacher-researchers proposed solutions to three of the key problems raised; nevertheless, it is perhaps worth considering these here. The issue of lack of time may seem insurmountable but there would appear to be a number of important points to keep in mind. Firstly, keeping the focus and scope of a project as tight as possible might help it fit into the timescale available. It is worth remembering that any research project needs to be practical if it is to be completed. Secondly, it is worth thinking very carefully about the choice of data collection methods in terms of how long they will take. For example, hours of transcription may provide a good deal of useful data, but if there is no time to deal with them, they can become a burden.

The second most commonly raised problem was the sample size. Looking back at the research contexts described, and bearing in mind that for many of the teacher-researchers this

was their first project, it would seem wise to have chosen to work with fairly small numbers of students. It was interesting to note, however, that several teacher-researchers felt that this negatively affected the reliability of their data. As one of these teacher-researchers suggests:

The small sample may limit the validity of the findings to the particular class which, according to Wallace (1998) is characteristic of AR. To receive more representative findings one might need to conduct some complementary research involving a bigger sample testing various examples.

Again, however, it would seem that there needs to be a compromise between practicality and ideal research conditions here. The results of this study would suggest that for one's own satisfaction it is better to work with the maximum sample size feasible. However, this will very much depend on the type of project being carried out. For example, a larger number of students might be involved if they are older and more autonomous, or if the data we are collecting is say, written work or questionnaires. When working with very young learners or carrying out a project that involves collecting data from individuals or small groups, a smaller sample of students may be much easier to work with.

It is perhaps plain to see why few teacher-researchers offered solutions to the third most problematic area, that of their research being disrupted by unexpected events. However, it is worth remembering at the outset of any AR project that these things can and do happen. This comes back to the issue of timing. It would seem to be extremely important to build in extra time across the project, and within each cycle of data collection, to take into account anything that comes up unexpectedly. Starting a project as soon as possible and leaving room for slippage would seem to be a good maxim. Likewise, an AR plan needs to be flexible enough to accommodate anything that occurs rather than having to start all over again.

To sum up, it has been very useful to look in detail at the real problems encountered across a good range of projects on a wide variety of subjects, carried out in a very broad range of contexts. Lessons can be taken from the similarities in the type of problems that arose but it can also be seen that some problems are very specific to particular projects. Although one cannot pre-empt every possibility, one can learn from the problems that arise and help others by sharing these experiences with them.

Impact of AR projects on professional development

This final section of the chapter will reflect on the overall conclusions made by the MA TEYL students on their AR projects. There was not one student who decided it had not been

worthwhile in some form or other to carry out their AR project. Even when AR projects had encountered problems, been inconclusive or had too much in the way of data to include in the evaluation section, the students still said that they had developed and learned by doing the AR project. Many of their comments in the conclusions section of the reports bear this out. Linked to the practicalities and challenges involved in carrying out the AR project two students said the following:

I learned to handle an overwhelming amount of data. In the end, I was surprised by the results, and partly changed my teaching practice.

A perfect way to finish the MA in TEYL. This proved to be daunting in some aspects in that one had to really rely upon one's self. However, it also proved to be very challenging and rewarding in that it really got one involved in the whole process of action research in addition to yielding some very interesting results.

In terms of direct comments on professional development, here is just one of many positive comments on the subject.

The process of carrying out an action research project in its entirety provided an opportunity for the teacher/researcher not only to observe the young learners in the classroom, but to reflect upon and analyze her own beliefs and these would seem to be its principal benefits... the deeper understanding of the learning process, and language learning in particular, gained by the teacher/researcher could be considered as an inestimable step in her own professional development.

Overall, then, it can be said that that these AR Projects are important in terms of professional development. In addition, some teacher-researchers mentioned other opportunities the AR projects had created both for their own professional development and for links with staff, pupils and parents:

...one of the main principles for AR is to reflect on professional practice. Carrying out the AR project with a small group meant that the researcher could gather a variety of detailed data from and about each child similar to a series of case studies. This provided ample opportunity for examining and reflecting on the YLs' reactions to the project and to the tests themselves. Interest amongst the staff and parents was also a positive side-effect.

Finally, and specifically for this chapter, past graduates were contacted, some after many years. They were asked what they now felt the AR project had done for them in terms of their teaching, understanding of teaching and learning or professional development. These are some of the many very enthusiastic and positive responses received:

I feel more confident talking about research as a teacher trainer because I have experience of it and I know I could help a student set up a small AR project too. As it was on teacher/student interactions this is a topic I have to cover a lot with my student teachers and all the reading and research I did prior to the AR has been invaluable .

It...makes me think about what I do in the classroom more carefully and how I reflect on what I do ... it has made me a better reflective teacher in that I know not to rely on instinct but must look for evidence.

I have had the opportunity to talk to other staff members about the value of AR since then, and to share my findings with other TEYL professionals, which has, in turn, inspired them to go on to carry out their own action research projects.

Conclusion

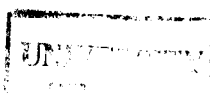
To conclude this chapter, then, it is clear to us, as a graduate studies tutorial team, that the experience of carrying out guided, supported and evaluated Action Research in the TEYL classroom has developed our MA students in innumerable ways, both professionally and personally. Having just had lunch with a visiting graduate of some years back, it was exciting, reassuring and of great importance to hear him say:

I can't go back now. I have to understand. I have to know what is actually going on in the classroom. I have to be clear what the situation is. The Action Research experience made me question all aspects of teaching on a regular and ongoing basis.

Isn't this the most important thing for teachers to be aware of, this constancy in questioning and seeking pedagogical answers to and understanding of the questions teachers should be asking all the time, throughout their work: *why / why not/ what if?*

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Hughes, A. (2011c) *Shrek* London: Scholastic

Level 1

'Shrek is an ogre. He lives in a swamp.'

Shrek lives in a swamp. He is happy there.
Then he goes to rescue Princess Fiona and the
problems start ...

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SHREK

DREAMWORKS SHREK



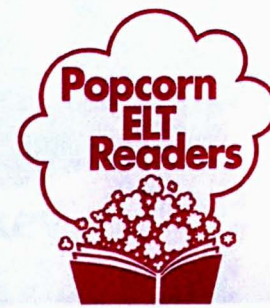
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Early Beginner

DREAMWORKS
SHREK



Meet ... **SHREK**

DREAMWORKS

I'm Shrek. I'm an ogre.
I live in a swamp.

I'm Princess Fiona.
I live in a dark castle
with a dragon.

Shrek

Princess Fiona



I'm Dragon.
I'm always angry!

Dragon



I'm Donkey.
I like talking!

Donkey

I'm Lord Farquaad.
I want to be a king.

Lord Farquaad

Before you read ...
What do you think?
Who is good? Who is
bad?

New Words

What do these new words mean? Ask your teacher or use your dictionary.

fairy tale characters

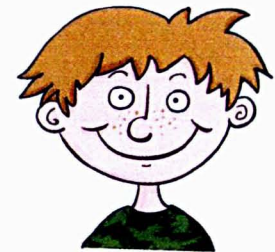


Here are some **fairy tale** characters.

marry



smile



Charlie always **smiles**.

beautiful



The girl is **beautiful**.

frightened



The boy is **frightened**.

ogre



This is an **ogre**.

swamp



There is a lot of water in a **swamp**.

castle



king



rescue



'Come on!'



DREAMWORKS SHREK

CHAPTER ONE 'This is my swamp!'

Shrek is an ogre. He lives in a swamp. Shrek is happy there. It is a nice, quiet home.



Lord Farquaad is a very small man, but he lives in a big castle. He is not very nice.



Lord Farquaad wants to marry the beautiful Princess Fiona. He wants to be a king.

Princess Fiona lives in a dark castle with a dragon. She is sad because she can't go out.



One day, Shrek finds a donkey near the swamp. The donkey likes talking ... a lot!

'I want to come with you!' says Donkey.
'No!' shouts Shrek. 'My home is nice and quiet!'

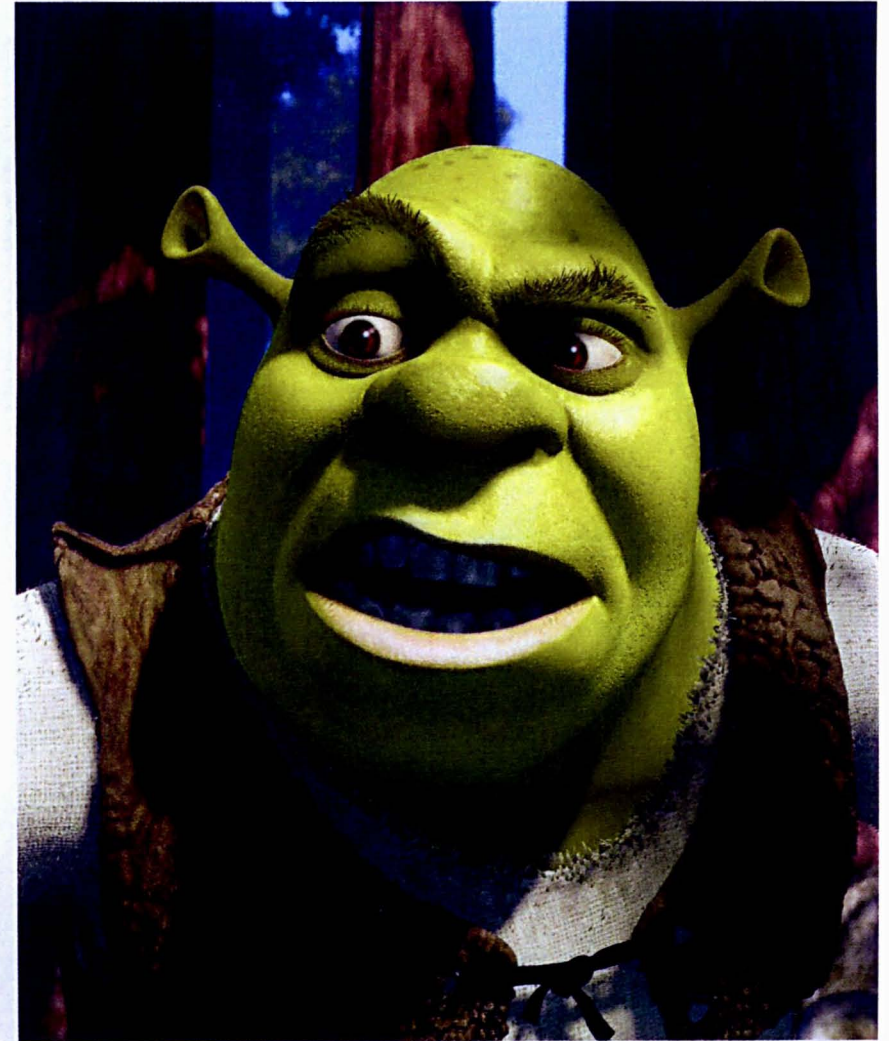
Donkey does not listen. He goes with Shrek to the swamp.



That night, Shrek finds a lot of fairy tale characters in the swamp. Now the swamp is not quiet. Shrek is angry.

'Why are you here?' he shouts.

'Lord Farquaad doesn't want fairy tale characters at the castle,' says Pinocchio.



'I want to see Lord Farquaad,' says Shrek.
'This is *my* swamp!'

'I'm coming too!' says Donkey.

'No!' says Shrek.

Donkey does not listen.

CHAPTER TWO

A princess and a dragon

Shrek and Donkey go to Lord Farquaad's castle.

'I don't want the fairy tale characters in my swamp!' says Shrek.



'Do something for me,' says Lord Farquaad. 'Rescue Princess Fiona from the dragon. Then it's your swamp.'

'OK,' says Shrek.

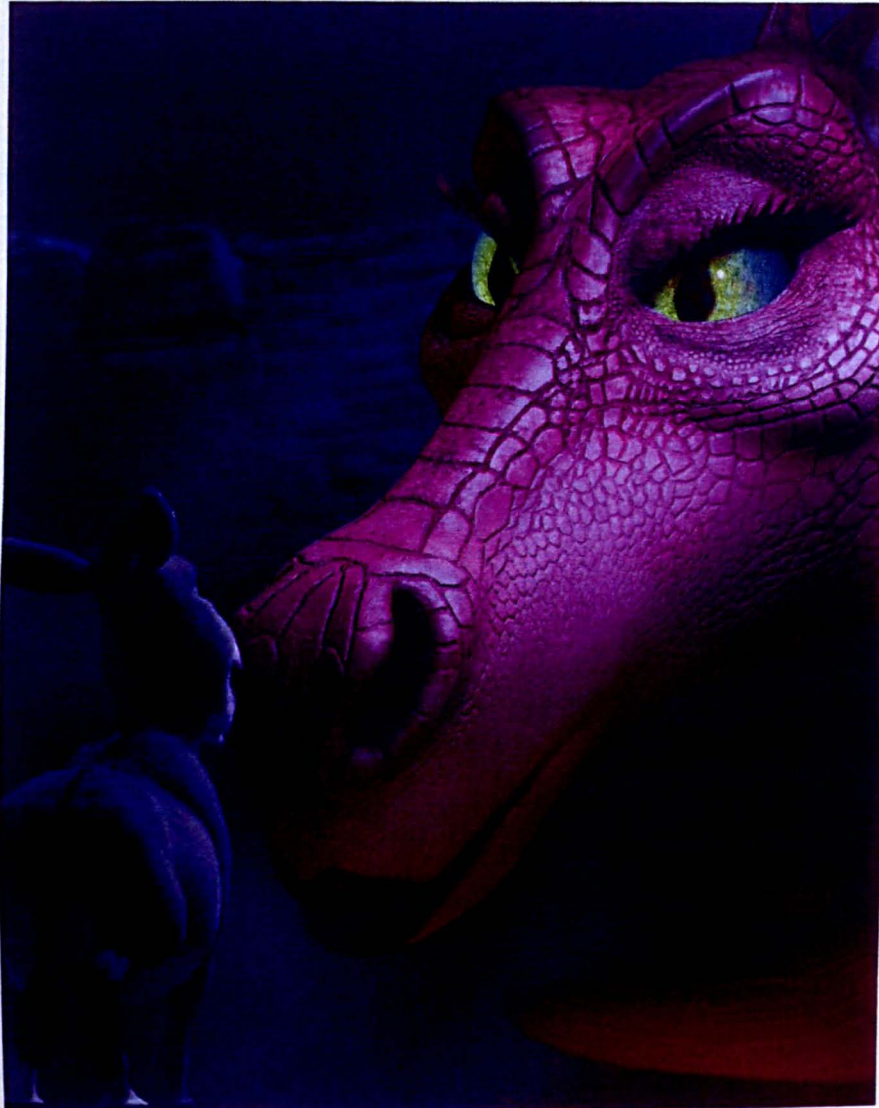
Shrek and Donkey walk and walk.
Donkey talks ... and talks!
'Be quiet!' shouts Shrek. But he likes his
new friend.
Then they see the castle.
'Come on!' says Shrek.



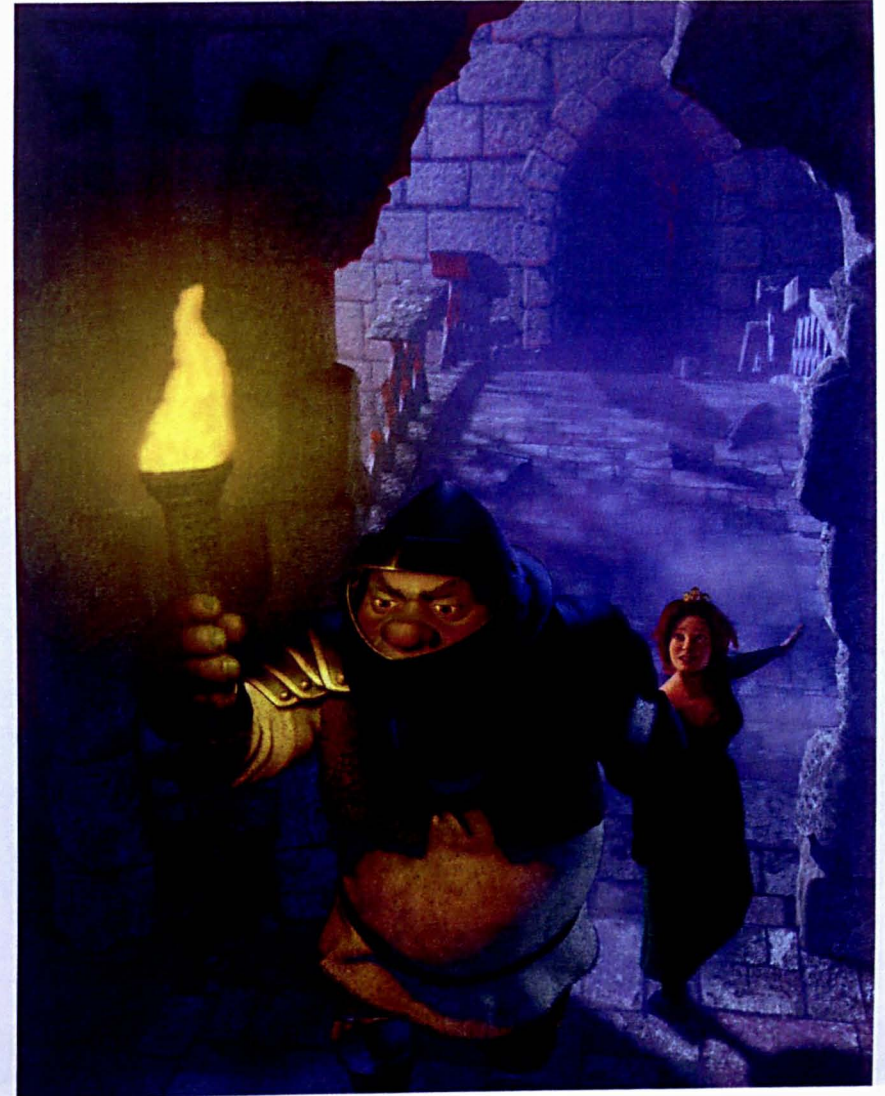
Shrek runs in front of Donkey. He goes to
rescue Princess Fiona.

Donkey is frightened. It is dark in the castle.
Suddenly Donkey is looking in the dragon's
eye!

Donkey stops and talks to Dragon.
'I like your eyes,' he says. 'They are beautiful.'
Dragon is happy. Now she likes Donkey!



Shrek sees Princess Fiona in a small room.
She is very beautiful.
Shrek and Princess Fiona run away from Dragon. Donkey comes too.





'Who are you?' Princess Fiona asks Shrek.
'Do you want to marry me?'
'No! I'm an ogre,' he says. 'Lord Farquaad
wants to marry you.'
Then they start the long walk to Lord
Farquaad's castle.

Shrek and Princess Fiona talk and talk. They
play games. They have dinner.

'Come and see me in my swamp,' says
Shrek.

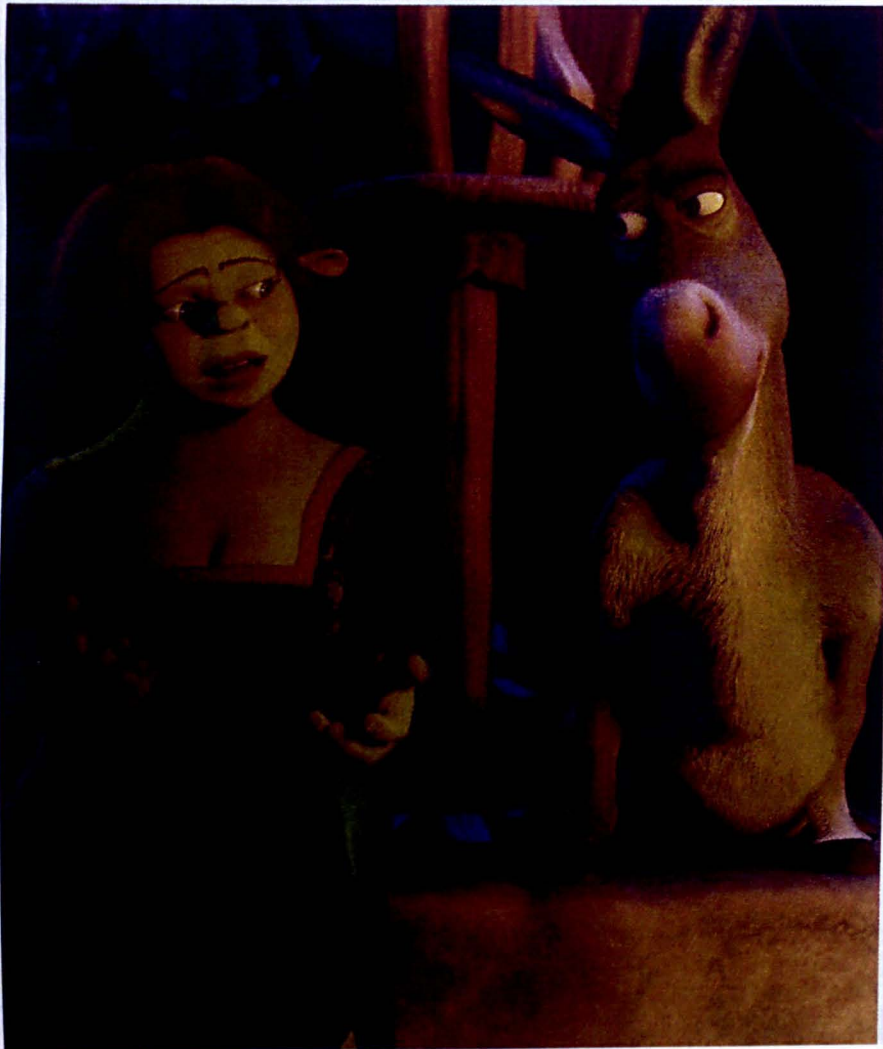
'Thank you,' smiles Princess Fiona.



One night, Donkey is frightened. He sees Princess Fiona and she is not beautiful. At night, she is an ogre!

'Talk to Shrek,' Donkey says to her.

'I can't!' says Princess Fiona.



CHAPTER THREE

'Marry me!'

In the morning, Lord Farquaad comes with his men.

'Marry me!' he says to Princess Fiona. Lord Farquaad likes her, but Princess Fiona does not like him. She goes to his castle. Shrek is very sad.



'Princess Fiona likes you, Shrek!' says Donkey. 'She doesn't want to marry Lord Farquaad.'

Suddenly they see Dragon. Shrek and Donkey go with Dragon to Lord Farquaad's castle.



Princess Fiona is sad.

Then Shrek comes in. 'Stop!' he says. 'Fiona, I love you!'

'Shrek!' Princess Fiona is happy now.



The sun goes down. It is dark. Princess Fiona is an ogre again.

'You're beautiful!' says Shrek.

Lord Farquaad is very angry.

Suddenly Dragon comes into the castle.

She eats Lord Farquaad!



Shrek and Princess Fiona marry in Shrek's swamp. They are very happy!



SWAMPS

Shrek lives in a swamp.

What is a swamp?

There is a lot of water and mud in a swamp. Many animals, birds and insects live there.

alligators

This swamp has some young alligators in it. How many alligators are there?



trees

frogs

You can find frogs in swamps.



birds

A lot of birds live in swamps. Herons eat small fish from the



mosquitoes

Look at the mosquito. How many legs does it have?



snakes

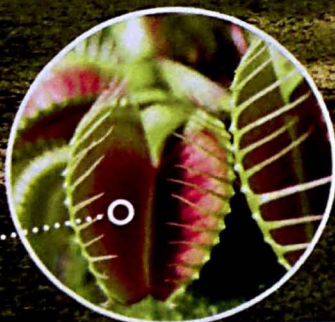
Snakes like swamps! How many colours can you see on the snake?

What do these words mean? Find out.

mud bird insect
plant fish USA

Did you know ...?

- ★ There are many swamps in Florida, in the USA.
- ★ Alligators run very fast.



Venus flytraps

This plant is always hungry. It eats insects!

After you read

1 True (✓) or False (X)? Write in the box.

- a) Shrek likes his swamp because it is quiet.
- b) Lord Farquaad lives in a small castle.
- c) Shrek likes Donkey.
- d) Donkey is always talking.
- e) In the day, Princess Fiona is an ogre.
- f) Princess Fiona marries Shrek.

2 Match the questions and answers.

- a) Who does Princess Fiona want to marry? i) Lord Farquaad
- b) Who does Lord Farquaad want to marry? ii) Shrek
- c) Where does Princess Fiona live? iii) Princess Fiona
- d) Who does Dragon eat? iv) in a swamp
- e) Where does Shrek live? v) in a castle






Where's the popcorn?

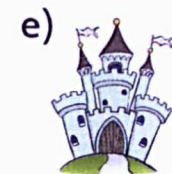
Look in your book.
Can you find it?



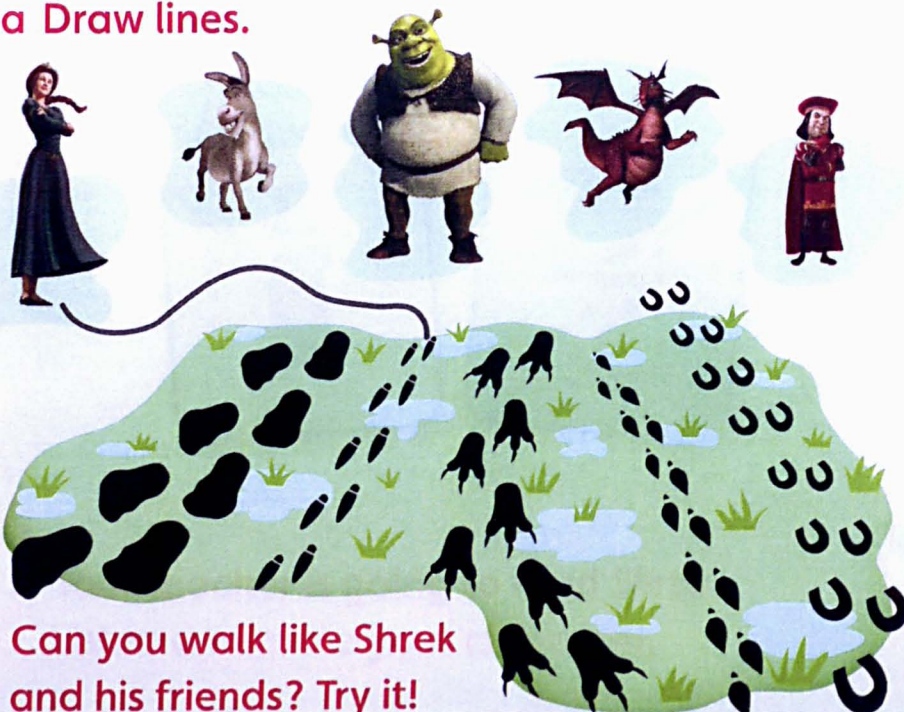
Puzzle time!

1 Find the names and words.

- a)  D C L T O S
O A W D S R
N S H R E K
- b)  K T M A B I
E L A G I N
Y E R O O G
- c)  L T R N J N
L R Y S Y F



2a Draw lines.



b Can you walk like Shrek and his friends? Try it!

3 Circle the right word.



a) Shrek is happy / angry / frightened in his swamp.



b) Shrek sees the fairy tale characters. Shrek is happy / angry / frightened.



c) Donkey sees Dragon. He is happy / angry / frightened.



d) Shrek and Princess Fiona marry. They are happy / angry / frightened.

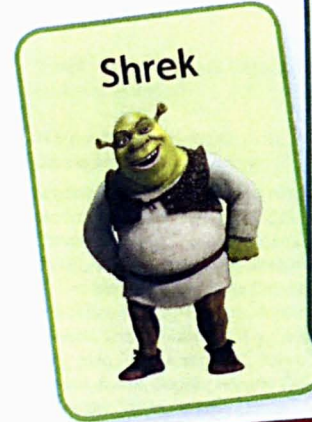
4 Who does Shrek meet first in the story? Put the characters in order.



Imagine ...

1 Work in groups.

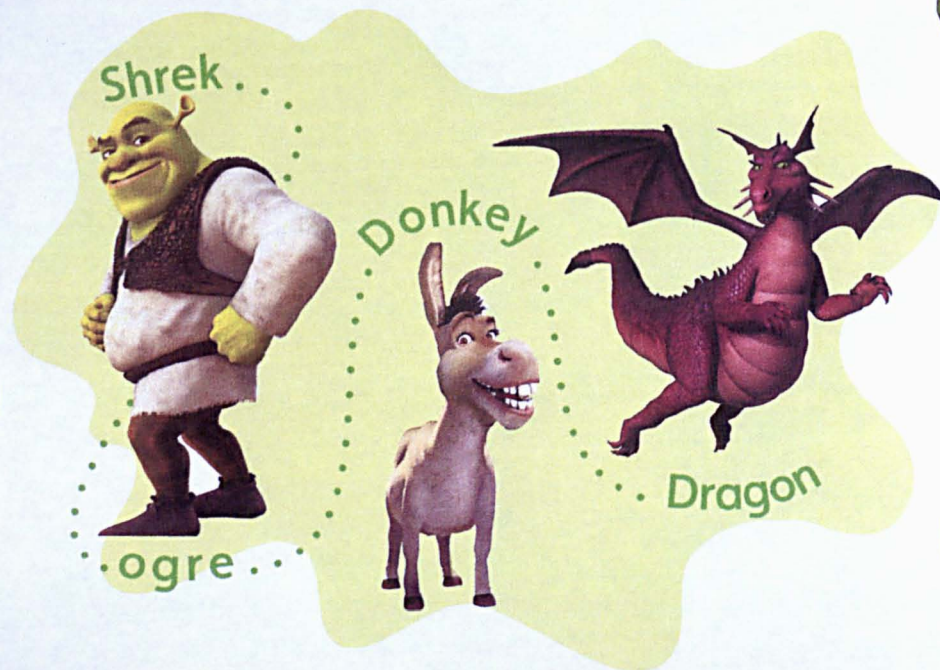
Choose a character from *Shrek*.



2 Your teacher is going to read *Shrek*. Listen and mime your character.

1 Listen and read.

Shrek's chant



2 Clap with the chant.

Shrek, ogre, Donkey, Dragon
(clap) (clap clap) (clap clap) (clap clap)

3 Say the chant.

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The use of Action Research in TEYL for Teacher Development and Professional Reflection: the joys and challenges.

Annie Hughes

Introduction and Chapter Overview

To date there has been very little research carried out in the field of teaching English to young learners (TEYL) which would inform those involved in TEYL, be they heads of school, ministry officials, writers, publishers or teacher trainers but, especially, classroom teachers (Hughes 2010; 2011).

Whilst large, long-term, research is valuable in education, we know that results from these projects can often take many years to percolate down to the classroom teacher (Hughes 2006). Those who are directly involved in day to day teaching are often the last to be informed of research results and any linked implications they could have for teaching.

However, there is one approach that can ensure that classroom teachers are the very first to know about research results and the implications these might have for TEYL classrooms, and that is when the teachers are the researchers themselves. In particular, the use of action research in the classroom is a particularly fitting type of research for teachers to use.

As a teacher-researcher in Hughes. Marjan and Taylor (2011), states,

‘Action research may be seen as a form of illuminative research as it is concerned with practitioners work in a particular context, rather than the establishment of universal truths. As such, it may serve as a useful tool for educational practitioners who seek to solve problems, reflect on their practice, and adopt a proactive approach to professional development.’

The word ‘research’ can often intimidate classroom teachers into thinking activities within a research project are very time-consuming, difficult to carry out or rather more ‘scientific’ than they actually need to be. Through the use of small-scale, classroom-based research, particularly *action research* (where small changes, within repeating cycles, made to classroom teaching/learning are measured and evaluated by the teacher-researcher), teachers can place themselves at the forefront of research and use it to develop and enhance their own learning /teaching situation. As Nunan suggests, action research can represent an ‘inside out’

approach to professional development (Nunan 1993, p.41), in other words, understanding and professional development can start from teachers themselves rather than from an external source.

This chapter will focus on teachers as reflective practitioners carrying out small-scale, classroom-based action research which will, in turn, lead to enhanced reflective practice and the furthering of professional development.

Discussion will be on the use of action research as a way of finding out: what children learning English are actually learning, thinking and experiencing; how particular approaches or changes in teaching techniques might enable more learning to take place; or whether some learning / teaching strategies might support more successful teaching and learning.

In particular, the chapter will highlight action research as an ideal small-scale and immediate means for 'TEYLers' (those teachers involved in TEYL) to focus on specific areas of learning or teaching in order to find out, in detail, what is happening in their own classrooms.

Some actual action research projects carried out by students on the MA in TEYL, at The University of York, an award-winning distance part-time master's degree for those involved in TEYL, will be referred in this chapter.

Initially, action research will be described and discussed, followed by a description of how it can be used in TEYL classrooms. Guidelines for carrying out AR will be given, along with mention of some of the pitfalls that can occur and suggestions for how to avoid these.

The chapter will then describe how AR is used as a model for reflective practice within a master's degree for TEYL professionals while enhancing professional development.

Following on from this, results from two surveys of TEYL action research projects will be discussed along with the findings and implications of these.

Finally, a short review of how small-scale classroom-based action research can be an important catalyst for individual professional development and practitioner reflection will be made, particularly linking to comments made within some action research project reports.

What is Action Research?

Action research is the carrying out of structured, small-scale, classroom-based investigation, or research, by the teacher, in order to understand, more clearly, what is actually going on within the learning and teaching situation in their classes. Crucially, the use of the word 'action' shows how the inclusion of some change at different cycles of the research is an important component.

Hughes (2006) listed the following reasons for TEYL practitioners to carry out action research:

- *To gain further understanding of how materials or activities are really working, or not working*
 - *To gain further understanding of how young English learners are interacting with the teaching activities or materials*
 - *To identify and attempt to correct a perceived classroom problem*
 - *To create, deliver and measure a new aspect of TEYL being used whether it be different materials, methodology or resources*
 - *To fill the gap in the area of TEYL practitioner research*
 - *To facilitate a professional development reflective cycle*
- (Adapted from Hughes 2006, p.15)*

Teachers engage in action research in order to either verify their own assumptions about what is going on in their classes, or, to help them decide whether to introduce, continue with, change or stop using certain approaches, materials or activities. By carrying out action research teachers will be both developing their skills as reflective practitioners and engaging in valuable knowledge-enhancing professional development.

What sort of action research can be carried out?

Simply - any sort at all! Action research can focus on any aspect of teaching and learning, from teaching techniques to learner learning journals. It can focus on activities, materials, teaching times or the classroom itself and how these might impact on teaching and learning. Whatever the teacher wants to look at, out of curiosity, concern or because of a need for change, can be the focus for action research.

As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) also suggest, action research can be used in a great variety of areas, such as teaching methods, learning strategies, evaluative procedures, attitudes and values, management and control or administration.

Why carry out action research?

We often assume we know what we are actually teaching and what is actually being learned in our lessons...but are we really, absolutely, sure what these are? How can we tell? Action research can help us find out.

Even though investigation of our own teaching may be uncomfortable it is still an important and valuable aspect of being a reflective practitioner and something which then, indirectly, really supports our professional development and growth. Nunan pulls no punches when he states,

‘..it is clear that action research is difficult, messy, problematic, and, in some cases, inconclusive....However, evaluative data from teachers themselves suggests that teachers who have been involved in action research are overwhelmingly in favour of it’ (Nunan 1993, p. 46)

The importance of action research is that it can often throw up aspects of learning and teaching we are totally unaware of and can thus, enable us to adapt and change our practice accordingly. Engagement in action research enhances the teacher’s own understanding of teaching and learning and enables them to move forward with clear views on different aspects of the teaching process, rather than continuing to rely on mere assumptions on what is being taught or learned.

Action research: part of everyday practice

It is important to clarify, however, that action research should be part of our everyday practice, fitted into any regular teaching timetable, which should not interfere with the delivery of the teaching programme. Additionally, the action research planned must not create any ethical problems for the teacher-researcher or school. Given that it needs to be carried out alongside normal teaching this further illustrates how ‘small-scale’ action research should be.

To meet these requirements, any action research proposed needs to be well designed and planned, with suitable and accurate tools for data collection, realism about how long the

action research itself will take, clarity of activities, and, an introduction of change and measurement within each cycle in the research.

As Wallace describes, action research is ‘...systematically collecting data on your everyday practice and analysing it in order to come to some decisions about what your future practice should be.’ (Wallace 1998, p.4) or ‘structured reflection’ (Wallace 1998, p. 14)

Kemmis, and McTaggart (1992, p.10) state that ‘...to do action research is to plan, act, observe and reflect more carefully, more systematically, and more rigorously than one usually does in everyday life.’ Here their reference to everyday life, as well as the attention to detail within the action research, is particularly significant. Action research needs to be well-planned, systematically carried out, data clearly collated and analysed, and implications from the findings considered carefully.

Nunan sees action research as ‘...a systematic process of enquiry consisting of three elements or components: (1) a question, problem or hypothesis, (2) data, (3) analysis and interpretation of data’(Nunan 1992, p.3). Nunan’s ‘three elements’ can be a good starting point when thinking about carrying out action research in our own TEYL classrooms.

However, Nunan (1992) also suggests here that there is a question to be answered in action research but it is really important to understand that action research can be enquiry-based only, and simply an opportunity for the teacher to take a magnifying glass to their lessons. In other words, it might be that you want to know, for sure, if, for example, your perception that girls answer more classroom questions than boys, really is the case or not. Action research would be the ideal way to investigate this and then used to investigate a ‘change’ which might rebalance such a situation.

This is counter to the belief of some action research proponents who describe and advocate the use of action research starting from a perceived ‘problem’ (Wallace 98; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000) or that action research findings *must* change things (Kemmis & McTaggart 1992, Wallace 98).

If we only measure ‘problems’ in teaching and learning, we will not be able to understand where any measurement of change fits. We need to be fully aware of the overall picture, first, rather than just a negative part of it, in order to see if, and when, change for the better, or worse, can be identified. To do this we must be sure of the everyday, *normal*, aspects of teaching and learning, measuring and evaluating these, too, in order to understand the

properties of what we perceive to be ‘the norm’ in our classrooms and against which changes can be made and measured.

Cohen and Manion (1994, p.186) have suggested that action research should be ‘a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention’. But action research does not always need to be an intervention – it must sometimes just involve taking a closer look at and trialling what happens if you make minor changes in everyday situations. It is really important, as reflective practitioners, to regularly take a closer look at our lessons, in order to make sure that our professional assumptions are correct about what is going on in them.

However, it is equally important to be aware that action research *can also* be used very successfully to look at a problem but it must not *only* be used to deal with problems. As Hopkins says, action research does ‘...serve to emphasize the importance of the acquisition of skills and techniques that become part of a teacher’s repertoire and which are then subject to the exercise of his or her professional judgement’ (Hopkins 2002, p. 51).

Why should TEYLers carry out action research?

Given the discussion above, it is clear that research is important for all teachers – in order for their own understanding of teaching and learning to develop. Therefore, it is equally important for TEYLers to carry out action research in their classrooms, too, to inform their everyday practice.

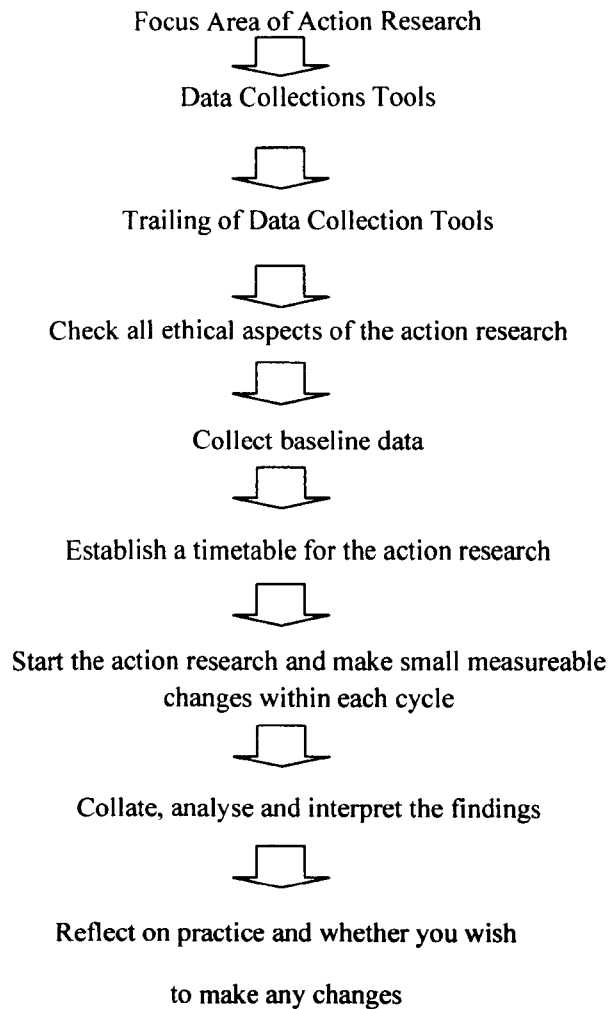
Additionally, there are two other important reasons for TEYLers to take part in action research. The first is that, given the lack of TEYL research in the public arena, TEYLers are not easily able to refer to research results to inform their own practice and, secondly, TEYLers themselves can be at the forefront of research and data-gathering on TEYL issues, and share these findings with other TEYL professionals. Referring back to the opening of this chapter, this will mean that TEYLers, based in their own classrooms, can be at the forefront of TEYL research into teaching and learning and the sharing of this knowledge.

A step by step guide to carrying out AR

So where do you start if you want to carry out some action research in your own classrooms? Here is my step by step guide, for thinking about action research, in the first instance, in order to help you make some decisions about the structure of your action research. It is presented as

the action research flow-chart and a 10-point researcher checklist, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Action Research Flow-chart and 10-point Researcher Checklist



1. First, decide what you would like to focus on in your action research. Decide on the action research title. (A rather bizarre rule-of-thumb, I have noticed, is that the longer the question outlining what you are investigating, the clearer and more focused your action research seems to be).
 - i. Be clear why you want to research this aspect of teaching/ learning and what, in particular, you are hoping to measure.

- ii. Remember to keep the size of the action research as focused and small as possible, otherwise it will become very unwieldy
2. Decide on your data collection tools. Your choice will depend on what your action research focuses on and what information you need to gather. These data collection tools could include:
 - i. Video or audio recordings of teaching/ learning in a lesson
 - ii. Detailed transcriptions of lessons (often via recordings)
 - iii. Questionnaires for young learners, teachers or parents
 - iv. Interviews with young learners, teachers or parents
 - v. Assessment of young learner production by teacher-researcher/ themselves
 - vi. An action research journal, or field notes, in which you note down any thoughts you have while carrying out the action research. It may not be obvious at the time, but your notes may help you to explain aspects of the data results, once you analyse them
 - vii. Learner logs, in which young learners are encouraged to note down, and regularly review such things as, e.g.
 - new vocabulary
 - new phrases or uses of language
 - their preferred learning styles/ approaches for individual activities
 - what English books, stories they have read/ heard and their opinions of these
 - reading logs about any books read, including those in a structured reading series
 - viii. Make sure that you have a range of data collected so that you can triangulate your findings
 - ix. Make sure that your data is both valid and reliable
3. Whatever tools you intend to use, you must choose, design or create them very carefully, then trial them with a group of young learners who will *not* be involved in the planned action research. In this way you can check if these tools give you the results you are expecting, and, if not, you can adapt them accordingly.

10. If you can, share your experiences and findings with your colleagues, young learners or parents, depending on the focus of the action research.

As Hopkins (2002, p.52-53) states:

1. Any action research should not interfere with any other normal teaching going on in the classroom.
2. The collecting of data should not be too demanding or intrusive
3. The teacher should employ reliable methods which will then give them confidence to create both hypotheses about the classroom and develop strategies which will be applicable in their own classrooms
4. The teachers carrying out the action research should be committed to the research
5. That ethical aspects of the research will be addressed
6. The research will be linked to whole school strategies and priorities

Pitfalls and problems that could hinder your action research and suggestions for avoiding them!

The guide above might all seem very simple and easy to follow, but, as you might imagine, things are not always that simple! I am not sure if there are any action researchers that come through a project with no problems whatsoever, but if there are they are very lucky people!

There are always some problems that occur when you carry out action research. When surveying action research projects Hughes (2006) noticed that the most common problems encountered were as follows:

- Not enough time allowed to carry out aspects of the designed action research or the designed research was too big for the time frame allowed
- Trailing was often not carried out first to clarify if all aspects of the action research would work smoothly, especially the data collected by the data-gathering tools chosen
- The success, or not, of the integration of the data collecting tools with everyday classroom routines so that they did not disturb ongoing learning/teaching
- There were few follow-on action research projects

- The lack of clarity and detail in the action research question itself making it difficult for the teacher-researcher to carry out a well-focused piece of action research

(adapted from Hughes 2006:21)

The list above outlines the importance of:

- allowing enough time to carry out every aspect of your action research.
- making sure you trial each aspect of the action research and every data collection tool to check you collect what you need
- making sure you introduce data collecting tools in advance of the research, so that learners are comfortable with these tools in the classroom before the research starts
- reading about other action research projects to learn from them or use them as a starting point for your own
- making your question absolutely clear and of the right 'size'

How action research is used in the MA in TEYL and why

Action research is used as an important cumulative and developmental tool within the MA in Teaching English to Young Learners, University of York. Table 1 outlines where, in the overall programme, the action research is carried out. As you will see, it is within the final Module so that students can apply knowledge gained through the programme for this formal reflective practice and professional development.

Table 1 Overview of MA in TEYL Modules, showing when the action research project is carried out by the students

First year of the MA in TEYL showing Modules studied:

<i>M1 How young learners learn and develop</i>	<i>M2 how foreign languages are acquired by young learners</i>	<i>M3 How the most suitable classroom environments are created for young learner acquisition of languages</i>	<i>M4 How assessment and evaluation in TEYL can be managed and carried out</i>
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Second year of the MA in TEYL showing final Modules including the action research project running throughout the academic year

<i>M5 How curriculum and syllabus design for young learners can be approached</i>	<i>M6 How materials can be designed for the young language learner class</i>	<i>M7 How professional development in the field of TEYL can be managed</i>	M8
<u>M8 the carrying out</u>	<u>of action research</u>	<u>during this</u>	<u>academic year</u>

The action research project, which can last the equivalent of three months, including analysis and interpretation of findings and the writing up of the report, is carried out by the students at any time during the final year of study and an action research report is presented as their last piece of assessed work.

The inclusion of this action research project was viewed as important to the programme creators, as it allows an important opportunity for students, following on from their studies, to apply their newly gained understanding immediately to the TEYL classroom and engage formally in reflective practice and professional development. This process could then act as a model for professional practice and development for the rest of their TEYL careers.

Following on from this action research, and once the students have graduated, there is an opportunity for them to present their action research project findings at the regular International TEYL Research Seminar, with their papers published afterwards. In this way, there is an opportunity for even further professional development to take place as a valuable by-product of the programme.

Surveys of action research projects and findings across the projects

Hughes (2006) and Hughes, Marjan and Taylor (2011) carried out surveys of some action research reports from the MA in TEYL, in order to find out what patterns, problems and passions were emerging; what the global picture might be in terms of action research focus areas; what the methodology focus was, and, overall, what the teacher-researchers felt about the experience of carrying out action research in terms of developing their reflective practice and professional development.

The two surveys covered reports from around 60 countries and 75 different action research projects. The findings of these surveys, and the action research projects themselves, have been informative and fascinating. Some of these findings will be now be presented.

Countries represented in the action research projects covered in the two surveys

Action research projects from over 60 countries have been carried out by students on the MA in TEYL since the programme began, but those countries represented in the random sampling within the two surveys mentioned included, (in alphabetic order):

Australia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Brunei, Canada, China, Columbia, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, India, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Norway, Poland,

Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Sri-Lanka, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey.

This variety of country bases helps us to get a more global view of what is seen as important in TEYL, though, surprisingly, comparing action research focus areas across these countries did not show any particular patterns based on the geographical placing of the teacher-researcher.

Focus areas of the sample of action research projects in the two surveys

The action research projects, chosen at random for the two surveys, focused on many different aspects of TEYL learning and teaching. If you look at the Table 2 below, you will see what these focus areas included. Aspects of reading, scaffolding techniques, motivation & affective factors, speaking skills and metacognition were the most popular focus areas, overall.

Focus Area	Number of projects
Reading	17
Scaffolding techniques	15
Motivation & affective factors	13
Speaking skills	11
Metacognition	10
Vocabulary	9
Writing	8
The Use of Story	7
Grammar	5
Pronunciation	5
Language Games	4
Learning Styles	4
Learning Strategies	3
Role play / song	3
Gender	3
Technology	3
Classroom management	3
L1 Interference	2

**Table 2. Focus areas of the action research samples
(adapted from Hughes, Marjan and Taylor 2011)**

Age group of learners within the action research projects studied in surveys

The age groups of learners in the action research projects sampled in the two surveys covered ages of learners from 4 to 16 years of age. The most popular age range for inclusion in action research was 10-11 year olds with 28% of the action research projects focusing on this age group. The next most popular age group focused on, involving some 23% of the action research projects, was 6-7 year olds. There were examples of age groups 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10 found in these projects but most of the rest of the samples focused on the 12-16 year age group. Just one project focused on the youngest age group, 4-5 year olds.

Data collection tools found in the surveyed action research projects

The data collection tools used across these action research projects, in both surveys, show the most popular tools used by the teacher-researchers. Perhaps, not surprisingly, the most popular data gathering tools used were: questionnaires for young learners; the use of the teacher-researcher action research journals and field notes; learner observations; student assessments and the use of video recordings.

The chart below in Fig 2 shows the data collection tools used with the number of times these were used across any of the action research projects:

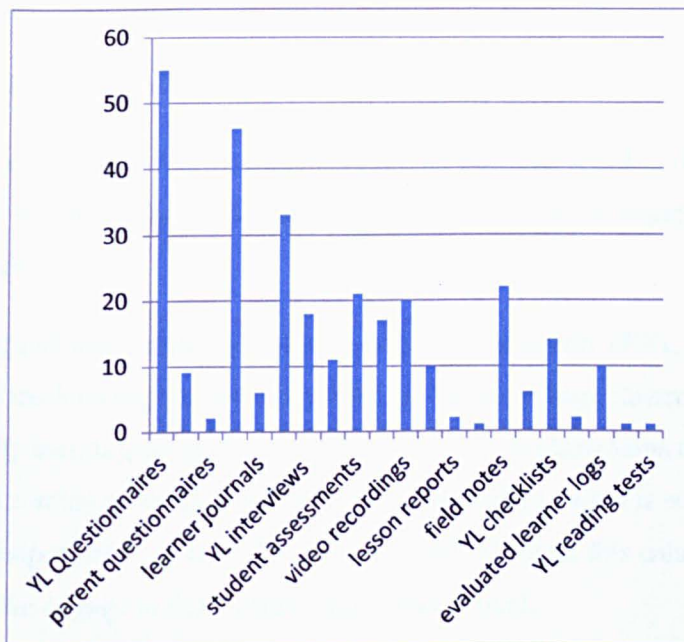


Figure 2. Number of data collection tools used across the sample action research projects

Main findings of the Hughes, Marjan and Taylor survey (2011)

After looking at a random sample of 75 action research reports, covering action research projects that were carried out between 1996 and 2010, Hughes, Marjan and Taylor's main findings about TEYL action research were as follows:

- The majority of action research projects took between 4 and 8 weeks to carry out
- The most popular number of cycles used in these action research projects (not including the baseline data collected) was 3 cycles with 4 cycles coming a close second
- Just over half of the action research projects surveyed found that the results were not particularly conclusive
- The main problems encountered in these 75 action research projects included:
 - poor methodology, making data unreliable
 - variables affecting the project or the data collection
 - too much or extraneous data gathered
 - lack of time

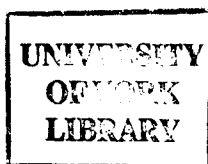
These findings will help other action researchers as they prepare and help them avoid some of the problems identified.

Reflective Practice and Professional Development.

To finalise this chapter it is valuable here to ask, how can small-scale classroom-based action research be important for the development of reflective practice and enhance professional development?

By carrying out small-scale classroom-based action research TEYL practitioners are looking, in detail, at the learning and teaching that is going on in their classrooms. Whilst we may find things out by carrying out action research in our TEYL classrooms that surprise or even shock us, the value of really looking at and understanding what is actually going on is incredibly important to us as TEYL professionals. Through this enhanced reflective approach to practice we engage in rich professional development.

In order to support this view, it is of great value here to look at what some teacher-researchers have said about reflective practice and professional development after carrying out action



research. Here are just a few anonymous comments and thoughts taken from action research reports between 1996 and 2010.

'Action research grows out of, and feeds back into, professional experiences'.

The capacity to be a reflective practitioner will enhance, but also benefit from, the processes of initiating one's own investigations. The results of these investigations then may become the basis for informed decisions about further professional action.'

'The process of carrying out an action research project in its entirety provided an opportunity for the teacher/researcher not only to observe the young learners in the classroom, but to reflect upon and analyse her own beliefs and these would seem to be its principal benefits... the deeper understanding of the learning process, and language learning in particular, gained by the teacher/researcher could be considered as an inestimable step in her own professional development.'

'It ...makes me think about what I do in the classroom more carefully and how I reflect on what I do ... it has made me a better reflective teacher in that I know not to rely on instinct but must look for evidence.'

'I think my AR really allowed me to understand much better the complexities of the TEYL classroom. It gave me an insight into the complex interplay between different student / teacher factors, and really highlighted how changing just one variable can have a huge impact. On the level of skills, carrying out the AR taught me how to be more analytical and more objective when analyzing what happens in the classroom.'

To conclude, this chapter argues that TEYL action research, carried out by teacher researchers, is an incredibly valuable tool for enhancing both TEYL teaching and learning and professional development.

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