

Book review

Developing as an EFL researcher: Stories from the field

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Developing as an EFL researcher: Stories from the field can be considered the conference proceedings of the 2015 IATEFL ReSIG Pre-Conference Event, which took place in Manchester, England. The conference “Developing as a Researcher” consisted of five-minute presentations of posters created by the speakers, and the e-book is a selection of papers developed by some of the participants from the posters presented at that meeting. Both the conference and the book were conceived for sharing stories of personal growth and perseverance around becoming a researcher in TESOL/EFL area, and spreading novel perspectives around the nature of qualitative research. Significantly, the threads that run throughout the papers are the role of subjectivity in qualitative research and the contribution of the collective action of the ReSIG to the professional development of researchers.

The resulting collection is a myriad of narratives of an emotional tone about the efforts, sacrifices and satisfactions associated with research practice. The affective content is fairly balanced with thoughtful instances of reflection on methodological aspects such as the steps in the process, a few ethical concerns and several refreshing hypotheses about subjectivity, identity and context in research that may lead to further exploration beyond the action sphere of the ReSIG. This book offers not only an emotional and careful self-reflective approach to the field of research in EFL, but also a valuable contribution to keeping the flame of vocation burning in the heart of practitioner-researchers and awaking in learners and teachers the interest for research.



The editorial work, in charge of Sian Etherington and Mark Daubrey, organized the book around three strands of interest and some key ideas covered during the panel discussion at the end of the conference in Manchester. The whole selection of papers is preceded by an acknowledgement section, a note on the contributors with information about their credentials, and an introduction in charge of Sian Etherington that includes a succinct reference to the conference events, an outline of the texts included in the book and an editor's personal reflection upon the encounter in Manchester. This digital edition comes with features of interactive nature. For instance, each paper includes a digital link to a YouTube video of the poster presentation, and an active "Contents" icon facilitates the navigation to specific sections of the book.

Each strand is introduced by the paper of the impulse speaker, an invited discussant of significant trajectory in the field of EFL such as David Nunan, Sue Garton and Cynthia White. The first strand, "A researcher's journey: Challenges, issues and strategies," is introduced by Nunan's paper in which the author shares a shocking experience that marked the beginning for his research activity. It is followed by four participants' narratives of their own paths along the route of research. The second strand, "Specific methods and specific challenges," consists of four papers into key features of qualitative research, the inherent messiness to qualitative data and the need for openness and tolerance to complexity as an indispensable methodological disposition. The third strand, "Identities, roles, relationships and contexts in research," represents the bulk of the book and includes six papers dealing with the central role of researchers' and participants' subjectivities in every stage of the research process.

Each strand of the book offers a new perspective on the need of examining more seriously the role of affective factors in qualitative research and the significance of transforming the practice endeavour into a shared experience of learning. The book considers an often-neglected truth: at the end of the day, personal and professional life are deeply intertwined and both are motivated by the promise of improvement.

Strand 1 includes multiple pearls of wisdom that beyond the specific circumstances that helped them to flourish can help many others to face the challenges the research journey may carry in a multiplicity of contexts. Becky Steven's emphasis on the importance of sharing findings with partners, Irena Mestrovic's invitation to discuss more openly the affective dynamics of being a researcher, Assia Slimani-Rolls's findings about the impact of teachers' engagement with research on their own professional development, or Alexa Piaggio's exercise of intellectual honesty in the face of failure will offer several instances of deep reflection.

Strand 2 focuses on the specific challenge of doing qualitative research and classroom-based research. Issues such as the dilemma within the researcher-participant relationship, the definition of effective data collection, the tension between real-life messiness and theoretically informed interpretations, the marginalization of the participants'

voice, the need of growing as a disciplined writer, as well as the benefits of sharing the journey, will provide the reader with a vivid picture of the forces defining the dynamics in different stages of the practice and the possibilities for further systematization.

Strand 3 concentrates on the person of the researcher affected by the complexity of the context of work. Considerations around personal trajectories, such as playing contradictory roles in the classroom, dealing with dilemmas or the complexities within the implementation of a teacher education programme, will bring to light the centrality of the researcher's subjectivity and how their identity is shaped by a context of shifting relationships and the need to fulfil multiple roles.

The book ends with a summary of the ideas that emerged during the panel discussion, few final remarks by Mark Daubrey, and a final invitation to become a member of the ReSIG.

Developing as an EFL Researcher captures real life experiences and honest reflections on the nature of the research practice by presenters from different cultural backgrounds, all shared in the context of the supportive and fruitful environment provided by the ReSIG. It will both inspire professionals to persevere in their work and awake in outsiders the desire to explore the field and consider research as a fundamental aspect of their development as teachers. This book may inspire other groups of professionals to build community sense through the sharing of experiences around the topic and to inquiry further in the role of classroom-based research as a tool for professional development.

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