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# Joining The Club: Teachers Collaborate to Develop a Research Mindset and Unlock the Benefits of Teacher Research

*Laura Walker, Melanie Carson, Danila Datti, and Jungmin Lee*

## **Abstract**

While the benefits of teacher research for teacher development and classroom practice are well documented, it is our belief that many second language teachers lack the confidence, skills and resources to 'join the research club', and therefore fail to develop as teacher-researchers. Using a classroom-based project in which experienced second language teachers reversed roles and became language learners as project stimulus, four aspiring teacher-researchers worked together to overcome a fixed mindset to engagement in research. This experience revealed that collaboration is key, enabling the growth of a research mindset for group members, and progress in teacher-researcher development.

## **Introduction & Literature Review**

### ***How teacher research can support teacher development***

The process of language teachers' transition to a teacher-researcher role is significant not just for those working within the university sector, but is also relevant for language teachers in many contexts who wish to become influencers and agents of change in language teaching rather than simply recipients of research wisdom (Donato, 2003: 2). University language teachers already have the advantage of easier access to resources and by the nature of their work as university educators, are aware of the 'complex relationship' which exists between research knowledge and teaching (Borg, 2010: 411). Although we may feel that we are 'critical consumers' (ibid: 410) when we engage in action research, set up reading circles, or immerse ourselves in the literature of our field, the 'highly individualistic culture of teaching' (Roberts, 1993: 8), combined with the feeling that we are intended to be *consumers* of research, rather than *innovators* can frustrate teacher-researcher development. In allowing teachers to develop not just as individuals within the profession, but who shape the profession, doing research can empower teachers (Houser, 1990:59). Extensive research has highlighted the numerous additional benefits to teachers of being actively engaged in doing research. For example, it can develop teachers' 'professional competence' (Atay, 2008: 145) and 'confidence' (Zeichner, 2003:301, in Borg, 2010); help teachers develop their research skills (Atay, 2006), and develop a 'problem-solving mindset' to dealing with classroom problems (Borg, 2010:403).

Lamb and Simpson (2003) argue that teacher engagement with research can lead to a development of professional autonomy. Reading and absorbing others' ideas, while useful, is not enough to stimulate growth and foster independence. Understanding and implementing good practice does not just come from employing handed-down methods and changing one's *actions*, but through changes in *thinking* (Davis, 1995:178, in Lamb and Simpson 2003).

While many language teachers are engaged *with research*, they may also wish to engage *in research*. Both in and outside the university context there are factors which can

prevent successful engagement in research. We ourselves found it difficult to step into the role of teacher-researcher and making our 'systematic inquiry' public (Borg, 2010: 395), but through initiating a project, working together, and gaining small successes we hope we can inspire others to become more involved in research.

### ***Sharing research results***

While this definition of teacher research includes the need for the research to be made public, Borg's (2009) study of English language teachers' conceptions of research indicated that teachers were likely to view this as a less important element of research. However, if results of classroom inquiry are not disseminated then that inquiry remains personal and, while it may benefit the immediate classroom practice of that teacher, it will not have a wider impact beyond that classroom. Keeping research hidden rather than sharing it may then undermine some of those potential benefits of research discussed earlier.

Many teachers understand 'made public' to mean publication in academic journals (Borg, 2009: 375); this belief can be demotivating for teachers (Smith et al., 2016). However, Burns (2010: 150-165) and others (Smith et al., 2016; Borg, 2009) argue that the definition of 'made public' can be much broader and include more informal, and 'teacher-friendly' (Smith, 2015: 3), methods of sharing research such as: talks at staff meetings; blogs; workshops, newsletters; as well as the more formal conference presentations and journal articles.

Pressure from peers or management to publish and record outputs can be particularly high for university language teachers. It can be uncomfortable to find that engagement is measured in outputs. In addition to this seeming unattainable, the value of an output, by itself, may also feel alien to teachers who may struggle to understand those, arguably more traditional motivations, which drive academics. Warhurst (2006: 119) notes this tension for academic teachers who value facilitating learning whereas researchers may be driven by a less tangible motive of 'advancement of the academic subject'. Additionally, finding meaning through work, and nurturing a sense of well-being in the workplace is often a core value for teachers (Falout & Murphey, 2018: 211), but understanding how engaging in research can become meaningful and contribute to that sense of satisfaction with work, is sometimes unclear. One way this can be achieved is by seeing that one's actions are part of 'something bigger than ourselves' (Compton and Hoffman, cited in Falout and Murphey, 2018: 211).

In making our research public, we feel we are moving beyond reflection, and beyond examining individual classes via action research, to seeing how in sharing our research we could impact the wider educational environment.

### ***Workplace conditions for teacher-researcher development***

In an ideal world, workplace institutions would facilitate engagement in research by offering a research environment in which conditions were right for experienced teachers to become more confident and engaged in doing research. Borg's 2010 review and summary of language teacher research engagement offers a checklist of those facilitative workplace conditions (Borg, 2010: see Appendix 1). Frequently, however, an absence of some, or all of these conditions can be daunting challenges to overcome especially for novice researchers. In setting up and running our Research Mindset group, we tried to mitigate these workplace

challenges by focusing on developing the project conditions that allowed the group to flourish (Borg, 2010: see Appendix 2).

### **Project conditions**

Borg (2010) mentions eleven project conditions which he suggests are necessary to facilitate teacher research engagement. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine them all; however, we have chosen to concentrate on the three which became the most relevant for our current project.

### **Expert mentor**

While he suggests that 'teacher engagement in research is more likely when the project in which they participate is supported, by a more expert mentor' (Borg, 2010: 420), this was not a feature of our group and we came to rely on each other rather than the expertise and guidance of an experienced researcher. Our group adopted the 'group autonomy' principle instead, in which interdependence via team-mates was fostered, and we were not supervised or instructed by senior colleagues situated outside the group (Farrell and Jacobs, 2016). This, we feel, became a significant factor of the success of the group. Allison and Carey, in their 2007 study of university language teachers' views on language teaching research found that despite fostering learner autonomy, language teachers may still feel a 'dependence on expert guidance or control' when it comes to engaging in research. They found that an approach to tackling the hierarchical system which persists in higher education, where research is dominated by academics, could be in 'groups of teachers banding together to claim some territory for themselves' (ibid: 73). The idea of group autonomy resonated strongly with us, as it allowed us to work in a safe space in which to experiment and maintain flexibility without sanction or permission, in a less threatening environment, where expectations were set by the group rather than externally.

### **Collaboration**

Working with others, and the concept that 'social participation is part of the process of learning' (Wenger, 1999) could also apply to aspiring teacher-researchers. As Allison & Carey (2007: 75) argue, could not the thinking around learner autonomy as being 'emergent and socially constructed' (Huang 2003 cited in Allison & Carey, 2007, p.75), apply to the development of teacher-researcher autonomy. Opportunities to collaborate on research projects is an important part of teacher development, and indeed 'academics of all lengths of experience value collaborative activities as a form of professional growth' (Ferman, 2002: 56-7). We felt a desire to break out from isolation, grow professionally, and finally join that community, the club of the wider research community, which can feel so elusive to novice teacher-researchers. Being able to 'extend insights about oneself as a teacher to oneself as an individual member of a larger community' (Bartlett, 1990:210) is vital for teachers, as they develop into researchers whose contribution is valued. In order for our research mindset group to better understand how to inhabit more fully the teacher-researcher identity, we needed to facilitate maximum co-operation. Farrell and Jacobs (2016) highlight the benefits of quality reflection within a group, and outline the required attitudes. In designing and implementing our group we were particularly drawn to those: being *open-minded, responsible, wholehearted* (Dewey, 1933, in Farrell & Jacobs, 2016) and the corresponding co-operative learning principles suggested by Jacobs and Kimura (2013, in Farrell & Jacobs, 2016). Our group was therefore: heterogenous, devoted to developing

collaborative skills; its small size facilitated the 'quality and quantity of interactions'; democratic and inclusive; used clear assigned roles; supported positive interdependence within the group (Farrell & Jacobs, 2016: 4-7).

### **Our study**

This current study aimed to help participants understand the research process and facilitate growth towards becoming teacher-researchers. It attempted to answer the questions: '*What can we, as inexperienced researchers, learn about the research process by being engaged in doing research?*' and ultimately, '*How can teachers go from being research-informed and engaged with research to becoming teacher-researchers?*'

Within a social-constructionist approach, we examined Borg's framework of project conditions, and used it as a 'readiness audit' (Borg, 2010:419). As our project formed without the support or guidance of an expert mentor, we discovered that the success of the project lay in its collaborative nature, and moreover, the step which has eluded the participants in their careers thus was how to achieve the dissemination of our research findings; therefore, the three 'project conditions' which we focused on were: [1] support by an expert mentor; [2] collaboration; [3] shared through various forms of dissemination.

The four participants in this study were already involved in a classroom-based study in exploratory practice (Allwright, 2003), which we called 'Teacher as Learner', to examine how continuing professional development could be facilitated by taking experienced language teachers back to the classroom, as learners, by enacting 'role reversal' (Lowe, 1987). This initial study was the impetus for the four experienced second-language teachers to collaborate and answer the above research questions.

This project aims to argue that for language teachers to be successfully engaged *in* and not just *with research*, and taking Borg's framework as a starting point, the most significant factor for us was collaboration, and that having a research mentor is not only *unnecessary* but could potentially be restrictive, and that as evidenced by this paper, we have for the first time, successfully delivered on making public the results of our research.

### **Methods**

This study took data from 12 semi-structured interviews and two focus group discussions with experienced second language teachers based at a UK university. All participants were also involved in the 'Teacher as Learner' project, an international cross-team collaborative classroom-based study. Participants were drawn from the following departments: English for Academic Purposes; TESOL; Hispanic, Italian, Korean and Japanese Studies. Each has between two and twenty years teaching experience. Participant workplace duties include teaching and academic citizenship, and some have both individual and collaborative research experience. Two of the participants have PhDs. Nine of the participants are female; two are male. Four participants are British, with other participants are teachers from Italy, Spain, Poland, and Korea. Two participants are senior lecturers, eight are lecturers and one is an associate lecturer.

A sub-group interested in developing their research expertise was formed: Research Mindset, the authors of this paper. We are novice researchers and have neither PhDs nor extensive research experience beyond a few conference presentations between us. We have no formal research training beyond MA level, nor do we have university research responsibilities.

Each Teacher as Learner participant was asked an identical set of questions in interviews which took place before and after the project. These post-project questions were derived from topics generated via the Research Mindset (RM) initial and follow-up focus groups and aimed to elicit responses around participants' experiences of research, understanding of what research entails, and thoughts on what they would need to become more research active. A complete list of interview prompts is contained in Appendix 5.

The small, stratified sample represented a range of language teaching backgrounds, and whilst this does not reflect the full complexity and potential effect of discipline and university contexts, interviewees were drawn from across a wide range of backgrounds connected with their national and career identities. As a small-scale study it may not be possible to make meaningful comparisons across the higher education sector by reference to institutional types, but by having such a diversity of nationalities, research and teaching experience, the data afforded us insights into a range of views and experiences.

The interview data were inductively analysed, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process of thematic analysis. These are becoming familiar with the data, creating codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, labelling the themes and producing a report (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 87). Each author separately used the constant comparison method in coding and reviewing themes. This involved comparing the datum several times through coding and recoding in order to identify overarching common themes and patterns. Following this, each author's findings were compared and synthesised. Themes emerged from the data, as interpreted by the researchers, without consideration of the initial hypothesis or proposed research questions. In order to be classified as a 'theme', it was determined that an emergent theme would have to be mentioned by at least half the participants. Quotations have been selected to illustrate the points concisely. The themes identified were the most commonly occurring, so they did not always relate directly to specific research questions.

After interviews were conducted and transcribed, the data were anonymised using British bird pseudonyms. Owl, Jay, Swift and Finch are the members of the RM group; Tern, Kite, Robin, Lark, Osprey, Songthrush, Swan were participants in the 'Teacher as Learner' project only.

## Results and Discussion

The results are presented and organised to show participants' responses to the following five questions:

- [1] What do participants consider as research?
- [2] What motivates them to engage in doing research?
- [3] What do they feel prevents engagement in research?
- [4] How do Teacher as Learner participants feel about collaborative working?
- [5] What did the Research Mindset group learn about working together?

### ***What do participants consider as research?***

Discussions reveal that the participants often consider research to be a formal academic activity, resulting in publications. Outcomes and publishing papers are a focus of each definition of research, perhaps unsurprising given the university setting.

Swift: I don't really consider myself as an active researcher because I don't really have [many] outcome[s].

Finch: Anything tangible to show, that's why I don't feel [like a researcher].

This view of more formal research was somewhat negative for some participants:

Lark: ... but I don't, I don't subscribe to doing research for the sake of doing research for, you know, the kind of culture of that we need to produce things.

Osprey: ...nowadays we don't just do it for ourselves we have to do it for some sort of reason, have some sort of transferability to it be it public or just the university.

However, the Research Mindset group appears to have started to explore and occupy the space between formal academic research and personal reflective practice as teacher researchers. In the second post-project discussion, the group acknowledges more informal ways of disseminating the findings:

Finch: .... we need something to show, that we are research based, as you said, if we did something already in the classroom to.

Owl: Yeah, and I bet you could [stand up ..... and then talk [about ...to the school ..... or you could [talk about all the things that have come.

Finch: [I guess I could say, like, I did something. but I definitely changed something in...my classroom ... every week.

We also start to develop a broader definition of outcomes, describing them in terms of well-being and networking rather than equating them solely with publication:

Jay: .....people have built networks across the school and ... I think that's a major thing that's come out of it [Teacher as Learner project] that makes me happier.

There's people you can go to ... for support in different subject areas...if people have better relationships, that's gonna make the school more successful.

Swift: And by comparing them as well, it was quite nice for me to see my language teaching or, the delivery of teaching more objectively ...., there could be some other perspectives, how they perceive delivery (...) in a little, it could be little things but it was quite useful, and it was actually fun, do you know really fun to talk about it...it...helped us build-up some ideas ... and made us keep...having conversations about it.

There seems to have been a small shift in attitude to research away from a focus on product to a realisation of the benefits of the process.

### ***What motivates participants to engage in doing research?***

In all the data we looked at for this paper, the biggest motivating factor for participants to want or to engage in doing research was that of finding a topic or project which would directly impact their practice as university teachers. This was also true for those in the RM group:

Finch: The benefits should be informing or helping with our practice.

Swift: So anything you learn from doing the research, if I cannot put it into my action of teaching or to improve the quality of my teaching, I wouldn't really find much benefit.

Jay: For me it is that it is related to your teaching ... I can see why that will improve my teaching.

### ***What do participants feel prevent engagement in research?***

When we asked the Teacher as Learner project participants what they felt they would need to become or be able to engage more deeply in doing research, time and resources were common themes. Some also mentioned they found the research culture off-putting or were struggling to know how to begin:

Lark: the whole, erm, research culture, it's just not my @@, it's just not my scene @

Swan: Lack of knowing how to start

Osprey: I don't have [any ... ideas

Lack of visibility of the research happening in the department could be another barrier to engaging in research for some:

Lark: But, then, I feel like obviously in our TESOL, so Colleague D's doing something, I think, about initial teacher training or something like that, which might be really interesting.

Finch: Mmm.

Lark: ... but I don't know if anybody else in our TESOL team is doing any research.

### ***Were these barriers similar for the Research Mindset group?***

We wanted to know whether the RM group felt the same barriers to being research engaged as those in the wider project group. Time and resources were mentioned by both sets of participants, as were lack of confidence and lack of recognition:

Jay: One of the things which would stop me from being research active would be confidence.

Owl: Whether you feel you're like good enough

Owl: Recognition that it's being done

Finch: Maybe it's time ... research has to wait, you know, has to be postponed ... it's finding the time and money.

### ***How do Teacher as Learner participants feel about collaborative working?***

While the RM group had not had a great deal of experience working collaboratively on research projects, many of the participants of the 'Teacher as Learner' group have had past, positive experience of working with others and were able to make comparisons or describe the benefits as they were known to them. These seemed to be in terms of the support or motivation it provided:

Lark: on my own I don't do much ... If there was something going on or ... like a movement ... then, yeah sure, I would get involved.

Tern: if I'm left to my own devices I tend to talk myself out of why it's worth doing ... working with other people ... also provides a bit of motivation.

Osprey: I prefer it [working with other people] ... because ... you know, it's umm collegial ... and also it's err safety in numbers.

Robin: ... working in a team, even if we don't agree on something, as long as certain standards are maintained it is better in a team than working on my own.

Others acknowledged the way collaboration stimulates learning:

Songthrush: ... they always ask the questions that I have never thought about and then I get to think about those questions, and whether or not I can get the answers to those questions right away.

Tern: I think you learn so much from working with other people ... different ways of thinking about things talking through what we think we've seen talking through the best ways of going about doing it ...

Kite: I think it's where you start learning when you see someone else and you help them ... even by just transcribing data and entering data it's something that you will use again if and when you get to do your own project it is something that is useful so of course the first time you help you just do very little bits and maybe you can't really see how they link together but then you know it ... it all comes together in the end.

### ***What did the Research Mindset group learn about working together?***

It was felt that the opportunity to work together on developing our 'group autonomy' (Farrell & Jacobs, 2016) was significant in driving the project forward to completion. In facilitating discussion over many issues, for example: insecurities over task completion; lack of confidence; evaluating next steps; sharing experiences these positive features developed the group cohesion and its progress. The act of collaborating was characterised as a positive for various reasons. The group, and the fact that we relied on each other, was a key motivator:

Jay: it makes me find [the time, you know ...you can't let them down=...

Owl: I think so and I think, feeling that people, are expecting something, even if that's because you've set it up ... I had responsibility.

Swift: having this type of time, and the meetings will probably motivate myself to be more research [active, I think.

Owl: and I don't, I think we'd be doing it if it wasn't for each other.

Finch: probably not wanting to let down, ah, my colleagues or my research as well.

Jay: =I think, I think that feeling's when everyone's dedicated, it just sort of reinforces, doesn't it, tha- that, sort of, yeah.

Swift: [I felt appreciated.

Owl: [like we are all in this together, yeah.

Or they mentioned how the actual process of research was becoming more defined:

Jay: [applying for funding, ethics] it definitely sort of helped (...) mmm me sort of feel a bit more like I knew what was going on and how people went about things when starting a project

This process of learning about *how* to do it *by doing* it, or at least, having conversations in which those processes are evaluated and clarified was a key example of the 'collaborative chat' [see Appendix 3] and an evaluation of the Teacher as Learner project itself was richer, more fruitful and took place in a safe environment where each contribution was valued [see Appendix 4].

Although we started our journey on the fringes of the research community, we engaged in real research tasks as a means of development and in pursuit of completing our researcher apprenticeship. By engaging in this 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Wenger, 1999:11-13) we aspire to becoming accepted into that 'learning community' and becoming teacher-researchers. This wish to initiate change by becoming part of the researcher community has been more fully realised through working with others.

## Conclusion

Our Research Mindset group grew and developed organically as a community of practice (Wenger, 1999) using an existing project as impetus and as a way of providing structure, facilitating growth and encouraging development through working together, where participants engaged in low-risk, yet legitimate research activity, adopting Farrell and Jacobs' eight co-operative principles (2016), and by evaluating the features of our project against Borg's framework (2010). The main purpose was to provide its members with a more thorough understanding of the research process, facilitate the 'joining of the researcher club', and act as a vehicle for the transition to teacher-researcher.

It was felt that whilst not having an expert mentor was not a conscious decision, ultimately it led to the creation of a safe space and forum for honest discussions, and ensured the focus was on the process, not solely the product. Indeed, the lack of expert mentor ensured the development of true collaboration within the team. We all felt that by working as a group there were scaffolding opportunities, as we learned by experience, by discussion, and by reflecting on the group's positive and negative experiences. In addition to providing support for each other, the group also provided motivation and a positive inter-dependency. It is possible that collaborative projects like these could provide a similar impetus, support and structure that a post-graduate course of study could offer. We suggest that language teachers in different contexts could be encouraged by this project and buoyed by the idea that language teacher research is 'a hidden vein ... waiting for an appropriate way to become visible' (Allison & Carey, 2007: 70-71). We feel that in future projects, we would try to replicate the conditions of this project, including the rejection of reliance on an expert mentor.

One barrier to research engagement which loomed large for RM and was clear from the initial discussion, was the idea of sharing, disseminating, publishing outcomes. One of the big lessons for us, however, was the idea that 'publishing' can be done step by step; so, firstly we have shared what we have done or discovered with each other, then we informally shared beyond the group, so with some 'Teacher as Learner' members; then we moved to sharing beyond the project itself. This took the form of a short presentation to colleagues from across the school, where we had to present our results and justify the internal grant funding we received. Our latest venture is into the world of peer-reviewed publications, evidenced here.

Pressure for university language teachers to be research active often comes in the form of directives to focus on outcomes, and staff research is only valued when it is published, and thus visible. This focus on the product, we believe, can be demotivating and discouraging to novice researchers, who are struggling with so much that is new to them about engaging in research, and are not necessarily provided with ideal workplace conditions or feel isolated from colleagues and from others engaged in the process too. We felt that our project team created in microcosm the 'organizational, collegial, emotional, intellectual, and practical support structures ... needed ... to initiate ... (and) ... sustain' teacher research (Borg, 2009: 377). Whilst it may be understandable that teachers put off engagement in research for lack of favourable workplace conditions, we would argue that by banding together, teacher researchers can do much to provide those conditions from within, rather than waiting for allocation of time and resources from without.

We would also argue that attention needs to be paid early in the research process, by both teachers and managers, and that whilst an allocation of time, space, resources is valuable, it is the acknowledgement, support and recognition that small projects are

valuable as learning opportunities and are part of the process to becoming fully-fledged researchers, which might mean that projects and participants alike, are finally able to flourish.

As we were able to overcome some of the barriers, or mitigate some of the challenges faced by less than perfect workplace conditions, and engage in research successfully, we believe that language teachers in various contexts could take our Research Mindset project as a model for Teacher Development, and that by doing so, participants could be part of something that was not output-focused, but which inhabits the process, and which leads to being able to combat the feeling of helplessness which arises when faced with the challenge of 'but I'm not a researcher, how can I start?'

Whilst we are not yet convinced that we can call ourselves teacher-researchers, we feel that 'knowing is a process, not a product' (Bruner, 1966: 72). For us, the process has begun and we have developed our skills in the area of how research is done, among others. Participating in this project has helped us challenge the view that identity comes from within. Indeed, we would argue that the reverse is true. By doing research we can become or 'construct ourselves' (Cameron, 2001: 170) as teacher researchers and thus inhabit that researcher identity. As Borg (2013: 123) states 'might collaborative teacher research be seen as a way of countering language teachers' feelings of marginalization, where these exist?'

Jay: =yeah, however, what we are doing I suppose is ... bridging the divide between researchers and teachers and that's when you read all the literature that's ..... what the researchers do, they're not practicing teachers generally, erm and so, .... what they produce isn't then implemented in classrooms because there's that divide, whereas ... because we are teachers, who are researching, if we are implementing stuff in the classroom that comes from it, then it maybe has ... even greater value ...

### **Biographical Note**

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### **Appendix 1: from Borg (2010: 419) Workplace Conditions**

Teacher engagement in research is more likely when their workplace is characterized by the following:

- Time for teachers to do research
- Resources (including access to research reports or summaries, and funding, where necessary)
- Positive attitudes to teacher professional development
- An expectation that staff engage in professional development
- An awareness of the value of teacher research engagement
- An open, trusting culture
- A collaborative ethos
- Incentives for teachers to be research-engaged
- The support of the management for teachers' efforts to be research-engaged
- A commitment to give teacher research a high profile within the school
- A desire to use teacher-generated research evidence for school improvement
- Opportunities for staff to be engaged in research
- A culture of enquiry
- An openness to change
- Recognition for teachers' attempts to engage in research
- A genuine interest in the outcomes of teacher research

## **Appendix 2: from Borg (2010: 420) Project Conditions**

Teacher engagement in research is more likely when the projects in which they participate are:

- Relevant, to the teachers' working context, professional goals and specific classroom concerns
- Feasible, given the time and resources available
- Structured, to give the activity a clear sense of purpose and direction
- Supported, by a more expert mentor
- Voluntary, so that teachers' participation is willing
- Democratic, so that teachers determine the focus of their work
- Collaborative, involving work with peers (and learners)
- Pedagogical, in orientation
- Shared, through various forms of dissemination
- Concrete, in terms of its outcomes
- Integrated, to minimise additional work and disruptions to normal professional activities.

### Appendix 3 Collaborative Chat [1]

Finch: =we said the same thing yesterday but it was=  
Owl: =mmhmm=  
Jay:  
Finch:  
Jay: baal seems to do, they do a lot thing, [but I've not joined it  
Owl: [salla  
do it  
Jay: have you signed up to it?  
Owl: no no do you have to be a member of=  
Jay: =I think you  
might have to=  
Owl: =and I wonder if it [works like that as well  
Jay: [mmm  
Owl: or that it's being, becoming a member or having membership of  
something that you [then might get  
Jay: [yeah  
Owl: preview to [some  
Group: [yeah  
Owl: something=  
Jay: =yeah  
Swift: *how* do you get the funding for getting the membership of some (...) err  
ass[ociations  
Jay: [association, I, yeah, I don't I don't know, I've never asked for  
it here  
Swift: I think it should be funded by the university=  
Jay: =yeah,  
mmm, yeah, mmm  
Finch: probably not all of it (...) but it's expensive, expenses for erm, if you do it for  
yourself, or even if it's your profession, it has to be you, or a subscription, or if it's for the  
whole team, what I don't remember what the difference was  
Owl: is it still possible to get funding to attend a conference because I know  
when we were at the language academy it was quite *tough*=  
Finch: =that's what [I asked

#### Appendix 4: Collaborative Chat [2]

Finch: [we help each other during the lesson, it was fresh in my mind, I needed time to, err, yeah

Jay: I wasn't organized, and it probably showed=

Owl: =no no no [no

Finch: [that's a

massive thing, yeah

Jay: [\*noise\*

so yeah

Swift: I think it was good to keep it right after

Owl: but I mean from the actual, cause I would just go, oh, I don't know what to say and I'll just write something, ooh, maybe that's enough but=

Finch: =I made some notes then I would probably go back home and=

Jay: =yeah you need to go back

Finch: and read again, I could add sentence

Jay: that's what I thought

Finch: when people were talking in discussion after, I was taking some notes, you know, if I had something in mind=

Jay: =I think it=

Finch: =when you said

something and when you said something=

Jay: =I think it meant we did get that, we did get f-, we did get data, missing cause reminds people immediately rather than dredge something, that was good for *me*. I did produce something and I did, I know it was that part reflection isn't it, then you can go back and revisit=

Owl: =did you read other people's?

Finch: yeah

Jay: I had a quick look at a couple of people's but again, I've no-, I'd love to read it all. I had a quick look a couple of times but

Owl: cause I think that would have been good if there had been a way of, cause I think what we talked about ended up being what we'd written about anyway, which is ok cause it might be a spark fo-, but the way we did it, in kind of, giving everybody a turn meant that they just, sort of, re-hashed something that they'd written, which is *fine*

Jay: [because that's what you've just=

Owl: [but =yeah, [that's what, that's

important

Finch: [what you do now

Owl: to you, but if there had been an opportunity to *read* what other people had said and *then* use that as, you know, oh, you know it's really interesting what you wrote=

Jay: =you could have maybe just like thinking about when that does, when that has worked in the past for me, the needs of discussion boards, then again, you could find, you know when you said to the question, and some people response to that que-, so you could have had a question on each thing=

Owl: =week or each=

Jay: =each

week or yeah, write it back and forth



## Appendix 5: Interview Questions

### ***Pre-project interview questions***

1. Do you think of yourself as a researcher?
2. What experience do you have as a researcher?
3. What is your motivation in participating in this project? What do you hope to get out of it?
4. What is your attitude to doing research? Is it important? Do you see any benefits of doing research?
5. What would you need in order to be more research-active? To develop further?
6. Any difficulties or any obvious benefits? Do you feel positive or negative about moving forward?

### ***Post-project interview questions:***

#### *Well-being / community*

1. Did you notice any discernible benefits or drawbacks to working collaboratively on the project?
2. Have you formed or been part of any sub-groups within the Polish teacher as learner project?
3. How do you feel about working on projects a) with others and/or b) by yourself? Which do you prefer and why?

#### *Commitment*

1. Why did you keep coming to the Polish classes?  
If you were a teacher – how did you feel about the amount of work / preparation / time involved in the project? Which aspects were most rewarding? Which aspects were most stressful / difficult?
2. Did you find the diary writing / discussions useful or helpful in recording and formulating your ideas?

#### *Change / CPD*

1. What have you learnt about yourself as a learner? teacher? teacher-trainer? researcher?

#### *The Future*

1. Do you think you might/will produce some research as a result of your participation in this project?
2. What other research plans do you have? Has this project influenced those plans in any way? (If relevant) Are you considering doing a Phd? How do you feel about that? Has this project influenced those plans in any way? Do you feel you need a PhD to be seen by others as a 'researcher'?
3. After being involved in this project, what do you think you need in order to start / be more involved in / complete any research?
4. Do you feel under pressure at work to produce research?
5. Define 'research'.