

Judith Hanks

Exploratory Practice in Language Teaching

Puzzling About Principles and Practices

palgrave
macmillan

Acknowledgements

My own fragile, partial, and developing understandings are represented in this book. If there is one thing I have learned, it is that developing understandings takes time – varying and unpredictable amounts of time. Sometimes we experience the joy of a sudden illumination, but more often it is a long, slow process of accumulation of ideas, thoughts, and experiences. An evolution in thinking. The joy comes not from the end result, satisfying though that may be. The real enjoyment is in engaging in that entirely human endeavour of working together to develop understandings that are relevant to our lives, thus making our lives more liveable.

I am immensely grateful to all those who have collaborated, not only with this book, but also in a myriad of incalculable, immeasurable ways, in researching, learning, and teaching, over days, months, and years. Such collaborations range from a conversation over a cup of tea, when inspiration hits, through talking at workshops and conferences and during projects, to everyday working together inside and outside classrooms. Any *mis*understandings, mistakes, or misinterpretations are of course my own; any understandings are the work of many minds, curious and enquiring.

Above all, my thanks go to my family, especially Helga Hanks, Peter Stratton, Patrick Hanks, Francis, Emily and Rosie Hanks, the Buckleys (Ruth, Paul, Emma, James, Jessica), and the Winters (Isaura, Voise,

Adrianna, Orland, Clara). In addition, my friends: Joan Allwright, Charlotte Armstrong, Bee Bond, Simon Borg, Caroline Campbell, Haynes Collins, Mandy Deacon, Ian and Louisa Graham, Peter Howarth, John Jones-Parry, Jane Kay, Kashmir Kaur, Carol Martin, Inés Kayon de Miller and all in the EP Rio Group, Becky Moore, Jess Poole, Morag Samson, James Simpson, Assia Slimani-Rolls, Akira Tajino, Martin Wedell, Zongjie Wu, the contributors to the case studies and vignettes, and *all* those friends and colleagues (learners and teachers, necessarily nameless here) who made this work possible. I also want to thank my editors: Chris Candlin, an extraordinary powerhouse of the intellect who is sadly missed, and Jonathan Crichton, whose rigorous, insightful, thought-provoking comments were invaluable in developing my own understandings of what it was I was trying to say. Finally, my deepest thanks go to Dick Allwright: an inspirational teacher, researcher, learner, thinker.

Contents

1	General Introduction	1
	Introduction	1
	What Is Exploratory Practice?	2
	Why this Book?	8
	Who Is this Book for?	9
	Who Am 'I'?	11
	Where Is Exploratory Practice in the World?	12
	What's the Impact of Exploratory Practice?	13
	Before Beginning	15
	And Finally...	17
Part I	The Historical and Conceptual Background to Researching Practice	21
2	Introduction to Part One	23
	Introducing Forms of Practitioner Research	23
	Why So Many Names for Practitioner Research?	24
	But Isn't Exploratory Practice Just a form of Teacher Research?	26

But Isn't Exploratory Practice Just a Form of Action Research?	26
Practitioner Research as a Family	28
Mapping Part One	30
3 From Research to Practitioner Research: Setting Exploratory Practice in Context	33
Introduction	33
What Do We Mean by 'Research'?	33
What Is 'Research'?	35
Quantitative Research	37
Qualitative Research	38
Mixed Methods Research	39
Summary	40
What Do We Mean by 'Practitioner Research' in Education?	41
What Are the Underlying Assumptions Guiding Practitioner Research?	47
Who Are the Practitioners?	48
What Is the Proper Subject Matter of the Research?	50
So What Makes It Research Rather than Random Looking Around?	51
Phronesis: Ethical, Practical Wisdom	52
Problematising Practitioner Research (i): Power, Ownership, and Funding	53
Summary	55
4 Perspectives on the 'Family' of Practitioner Research	57
Introduction	57
Why So Much Interest in Practitioner Research?	58
Working for Improvement (i): Action Research	60
Working for Improvement (ii): Reflective Practice	63
So Why Don't Practitioners Engage in Research?	67
Lack of Time and Resources	68
Lack of Expertise	69

Lack of Relevance of Research Agenda/Findings	72
Lack of Respect	73
Problematising Practitioner Research (ii): The Discourse of ‘Improvement’	76
Summary	78
5 The Evolution of the Exploratory Practice Framework	81
Introduction	81
Definitions	82
The Background	83
Where Did It All Begin?	84
Puzzling and Understanding, Rather than Problem-Solving	86
The Evolution of the Exploratory Practice Framework	88
Stage One: Relevance, Collegiality, and Theory-from-Practice	88
Stage Two: Developing Understandings	91
Stage Three: The Importance of ‘Quality of Life’	96
Bringing the Story Up-to-Date	103
Problematising Exploratory Practice: A Critical Look	105
6 Puzzles, Puzzling, and Puzzlement	107
Introduction	107
Why Does Exploratory Practice Promote ‘Working for Understanding’?	108
Why Does EP Promote Puzzlement? What Is It, and Why Is It Seen as Somehow Different?	112
Where Do Puzzles Come From?	117
So What Differentiates These Questions from the Kind of ‘Problems’ (or ‘Puzzles’) Found in Other Forms of Teacher Research?	119
What Do Learners Puzzle About?	121
What Do Teachers Puzzle About?	123
Problematising Puzzling	125
A Note of Caution	126

The Risks of Sharing Puzzled Thoughts	127
Summary	129
Part II Developing Understandings from Practice	131
7 Introduction to Part Two	133
Introduction	133
Resisting the Discourse of Improvement	135
Inviting Practitioners to Dare to Question	138
So How Might this Work in Practice?	140
Mapping Part Two	140
8 Integrating Research and Pedagogy	143
Introduction	143
Puzzling Over Bringing Research and Pedagogy Together	144
Exploratory Practice as Researchable Pedagogy	147
So What Do You Actually <i>Do</i> ?	149
Case Study 8.1: ‘Why Are Some Students Not Interested in Learning English?’: A Story of Developing Mutual Understandings	149
Case Study 8.2: ‘Why Are My Learners Not Taking Responsibility for Their Learning?’: A Story of Gaining Deeper Understandings	153
Case Study 8.3: ‘Why Do the Students Seem Reluctant to Take Responsibility for Themselves?’: A Story of Stepping Back for Understanding	156
Case Study 8.4: ‘Why Do My Students Want Lectures While I Want Discussion?’ – A Story of Collegiality	161
Summary	165

9 Collegial Working	167
Introduction	167
Is Exploratory Practice Transplantable to/in Other Contexts?	168
What Do Learners Think About It?	171
How Does All this Relate to the Exploratory Practice Principles?	177
Case Study 9.1: ‘Why Do I Ask My Students to Reflect on Their Learning?’: A Story of Mutual Development.	177
Case Study 9.2: ‘Why Don’t We Bring EP and Learner Autonomy Together?’: A Story of Integration	181
Case Study 9.3: ‘Why Don’t We Use EP in Our ‘Zemi’ Classes?’: A Story of Sustainability	184
Summary	188
 10 Continuing Personal and Professional Development	 191
Introduction	191
Learning as an Ongoing Process	192
Who Else Can Be Involved in Working for Understanding?	195
Case Study 10.1: ‘What’s the Link Between EP and CPD?’: A Story of Personal and Professional Development	196
Case Study 10.2: ‘Why Incorporate EP in Teacher Education Programmes?’: A Story of Overcoming Burnout	200
Case Study 10.3: ‘Why Don’t We Integrate Theory and Practice in Pedagogy?’: A Story of Inclusivity and Relevance	205
Case Study 10.4: ‘Why Do Teachers and Learners Struggle in the Classroom?’: A Story of Quality of Life	209
Summary	212

Part III	Understandings for Practice	215
11	Introduction to Part Three	217
	Introduction	217
	Issues of Culture, Identity, and Meta-puzzling	218
	The Relationship Between Principles and Practices	218
	Understanding	219
	Collegiality	220
	Relevance and Sustainability	222
	Quality of Life	224
	The Importance of Trust	225
	The Exploratory Practice Principles as a Network	226
	Mapping Part Three	228
12	Puzzles, Puzzling, and Trust	231
	Introduction	231
	What Puzzles You?	232
	Practitioners Getting Started	239
	Refining Puzzled Questions	242
	A Caveat: How Versus Why	243
	Moments of Transition	245
	Puzzling About Puzzlement	247
	The Need for Trust	255
	Summary	262
13	PEPAs, Culture, and Identity	265
	Introduction	265
	Identifying ‘Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activities’ (PEPAs)	266
	Starting Off: ‘Normal Pedagogic Activities’	267
	From Activities to PEPAs	269
	Avoiding Recipes	274

Developing Understanding(s) of Classroom Cultures and Identities	274
Cultures of Pedagogy	276
Cultures of Identity	282
Summary	288
14 Conclusions	291
Introduction	291
From Research-as-Practice to Practice-as-Research	292
Language, Culture, and Identity in Exploratory Practice	295
Problematising Problem-Solving	297
Looking Ahead: What Next for Exploratory Practice?	301
Exploratory Practice as a Form of Research	301
Case Study 14.1: ‘What Happens When Exploratory Practice Moves Beyond the Classroom?’: A Story of Explorations in Research	301
Exploratory Practice as a Form of Scholarship	305
Redefining Notions of Pedagogy, Scholarship, and Research	307
Implications and Impact	310
Suggestions for Future Research	311
Conclusion	314
Part IV Resources	317
15 Exploratory Practice Voices	319
Interview with Dick Allwright	320
Interview with Bebel A. Cunha	333
Interview with Inés Kayon de Miller	335
Interview with Assia Slimani-Rolls	339
Interview with Akira Tajino	343

xviii Contents

Interview with Judith Hanks	346
A Final Few Words from Dick Allwright	349
References	353
Index	373