

Practical Principles for Exploratory Action Research

Richard Smith

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Introduction

Three experiences / contexts of supporting teacher-research 'for difficult circumstances'

Chile – British Council 'Champion Teachers' project (Jan – Dec. 2013)

Chilean Champion Teachers

- Background
- Our progress
- FAQs
- Facebook
- Links
- Final reports



A two-day workshop in January 2013 launched the British Council Chile 'Champion Teachers - Action Research Project',

Here are [Photos from this two-day workshop](#) for Chilean secondary school teachers, [further information in Spanish](#), and a [video about the project in English](#).

This first iteration of the project ended in January 2014 with another two-day workshop in Santiago. Congratulations to all participating Champion Teachers! Here's a photo

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Cameroon (August 2013) – CAMELTA conference, leading to 'Teacher Association Research' project

CAMELTA





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Nepal (November 2013)– 5-day 'Hornby Regional School' on 'The Low-Resource Classroom', setting up teacher-research projects in groups



Richard Smith
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- IATEFL Research SIG 1
- Teaching English in ...
- IATEFL 18
- Champion Teachers ...
- Hornby Regional Sch...**
- IATEFL TTEd SIG 2
- Warwick MA ELSM / E...
- Red PICh (Profeso... 6
- Convenors
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Hornby Regional School ... **Members** **Events** **Photos** **Files** Notifications **+ Create Group**

Write Post Add Photo / Video Ask Question Add File

Write something...

Richard Smith uploaded a file.
May 8

Razia, Kiran, Bishnu, Shahid - how to teach creatively with text book.docx
Document

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Closed Group

The Hornby Educational Trust and the British Council work in partnership to provide development ... [See More](#)

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Real Life English
90,542 members

TELC (Teaching English in Large Classes) Network

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TELC Home

Network rationale

Large class size is a challenge faced by many teachers and learners around the world and is a particular issue in many 'developing' countries where teacher recruitment has not kept pace with rapid increases in school enrolments. Investigations of large class size and other challenges involved in teaching in 'difficult

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bit.ly/telcnet-home

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Resources for teachers and teacher educators

This is a collection of links to practical advice and other resources for teachers of large classes. Further below, there is also a link to resources for teacher trainers.

For teachers

Zahid Ali Jatoi
November 26, 2013 · Edited

Currently, i am doing action research in one of government schools in Hyderabad, Pakistan. It may surprise you but i teach a class of 140 students. The kind of issues i face in teaching English are that i face problems winning attention of students sitting at back, as the capacity of class is less than number of students present in the class , most of students' parents are unaware of English; cant even read so no support from family, and the same follows with students' friends in neighbor, no available library in school. In order to make groups, i ask students sitting on the same benches to work together as switching them or asking them to make groups from some other students create mess in classroom. Any suggestions, please!

Like · Comment · Share

- 6 people like this.
- View 4 more comments
- Zina Samir Samir** yes it's a good idea.but using pictures help in interpreting their writing ,too.you can rely on fluency rather than accuracy.
February 1 at 4:33pm · Like
- William Wolf** Some ideas that might help.
1. Make sure the teacher moves around the room rather than just stands or sits at the front.When the teacher is moving around the room, the teacher should focus not on teaching but on keeping the various groups focused on th... See More
May 3 at 4:22pm · Like · 2
- Zahid Ali Jatoi** Dear William Wolf, I love the way you have discussed ways to handle such classes and your advices and suggestions are really productive. Let me share one more finding of mine about the students of class and students of school particularly. I have lear... See More
May 4 at 2:41 am · Edited · Like · 1


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(1) Teachers share success stories





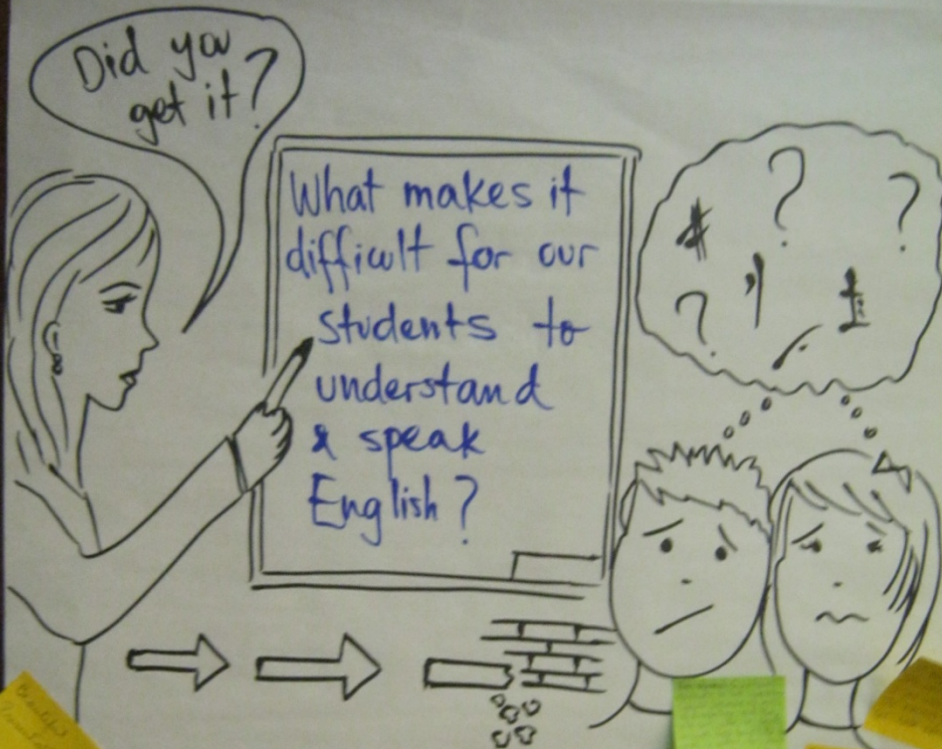






(2) Seeking initial clarification through questioning and discussion

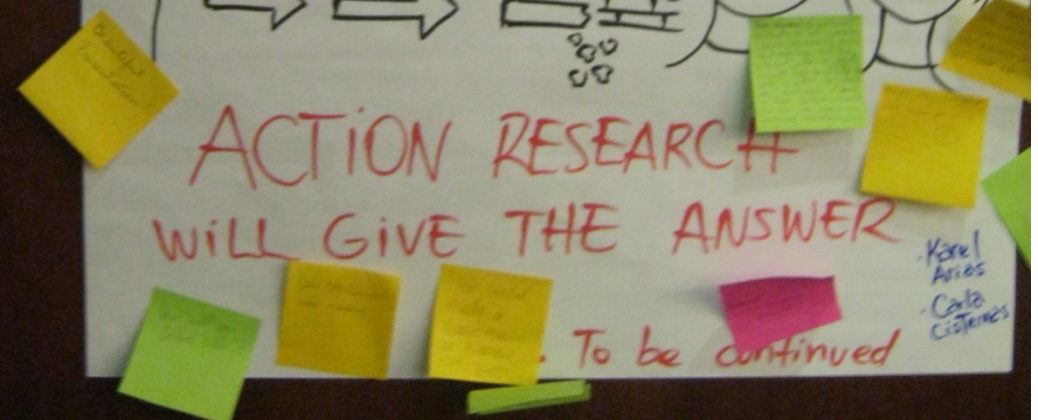




ACTION RESEARCH
WILL GIVE THE ANSWER

To be continued

Karel
Arias
Carla
Cisternas



(3) Explicitly countering positivistic preconceptions about 'research'

'Received view': Hypothesis-testing / control vs experimental group / pre-test, post-test / numerical data (questionnaire) etc.

Vs.

Exploring the unknown ...

Qualitative data, open-ended questions, teacher reflections, other teachers' views, emerging themes etc.

[example: Joya's presentation]

(4) Taking time for exploration before new action

Action research:

Problem -> Action -> Data to evaluate intervention -
> Analysis -> Interpretation (-> further action etc.)

Exploratory action research:

Problem/puzzle -> Questions ->

Data -> Interpretation (-> Action or further
exploration)

Problems can partially disappear through discussion with students, or be conceived in a different way (examples from last year's talk) and/or new actions can be suggested by students.

Roberto Delgado (Chile) – ideas for action from students' feedback – he gained a 'whole new repertoire' of speaking (assessment) activities

(5) Peer-to-peer and near-peer support

- Cameroon Teacher Association Research

CAMELTA research – one teacher's problems

Mengang is a purely French speaking area and most of the students' escape from English language classes. Again if the syllabus has to be covered even up to 50%, it should be during the first term because most of them stop schooling at the end of February, most of the girls get pregnant during the academic year , the boys abandon school to ride motor bikes etc. The worst problem is that of [lack of?] course books. The mentality of the people of the area is very funny. It is very normal for [a] parent to come to school, attack a male teacher for refusing to fall in love with his daughter, take home assignments are never done etc.

His 'solutions':

All I do is to advise the students on the advantages of going to school and learning the both languages.

- I tell the place of the English language in the world.
- During the bilingualism week, I try to come up with various interesting activities in a bid to encourage them to be interested in the language.
- Formation of the English language club and at times I bring in competition in the class where each row competes with the other in class participation. It's a bit successful

(5) Peer-to-peer and near-peer support

- Cameroon Teacher Association Research
- Forthcoming second cycle of the Chilean project (from July 2014): presentations and potentially mentoring by former participants

(6) Informal reporting – speaking
before writing

Chilean Champion Teachers - Final Reports (January 2014)

Teachers who completed Exploratory/Action Research projects first gave a poster presentation to other teachers - this helped them quickly write an informal written report.

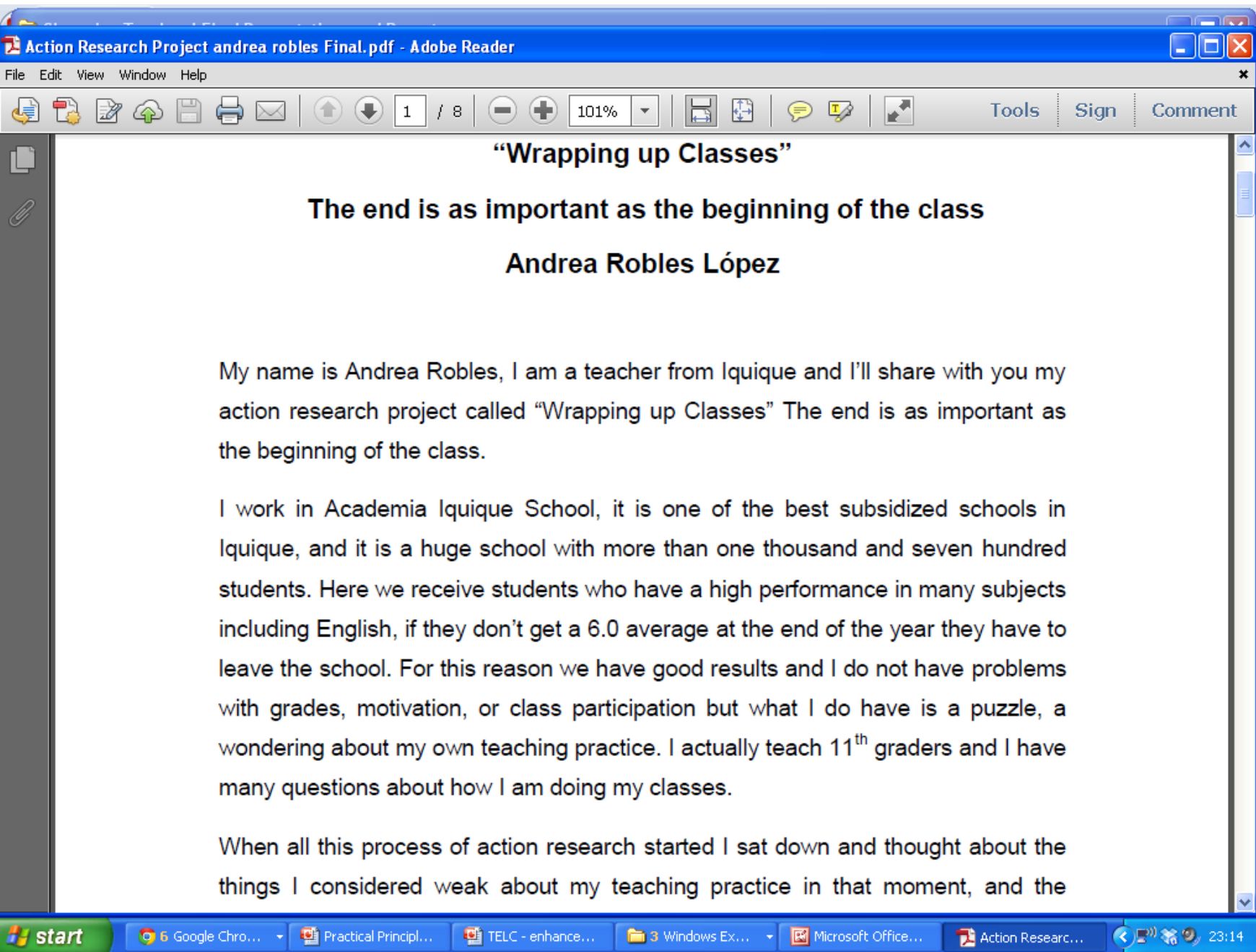


Wrapping up classes

Andrea Robles

"The end is as important as the beginning of the class"

The written report can be viewed as pdf below with most browsers:



I tried 4 more activities:

-The magic boards: that is a white plastic folder with a white paper inside where the students can write with a whiteboard marker and show the answers in English to the teacher then they can erase the answer and write again. I did that in pairs with different contents.

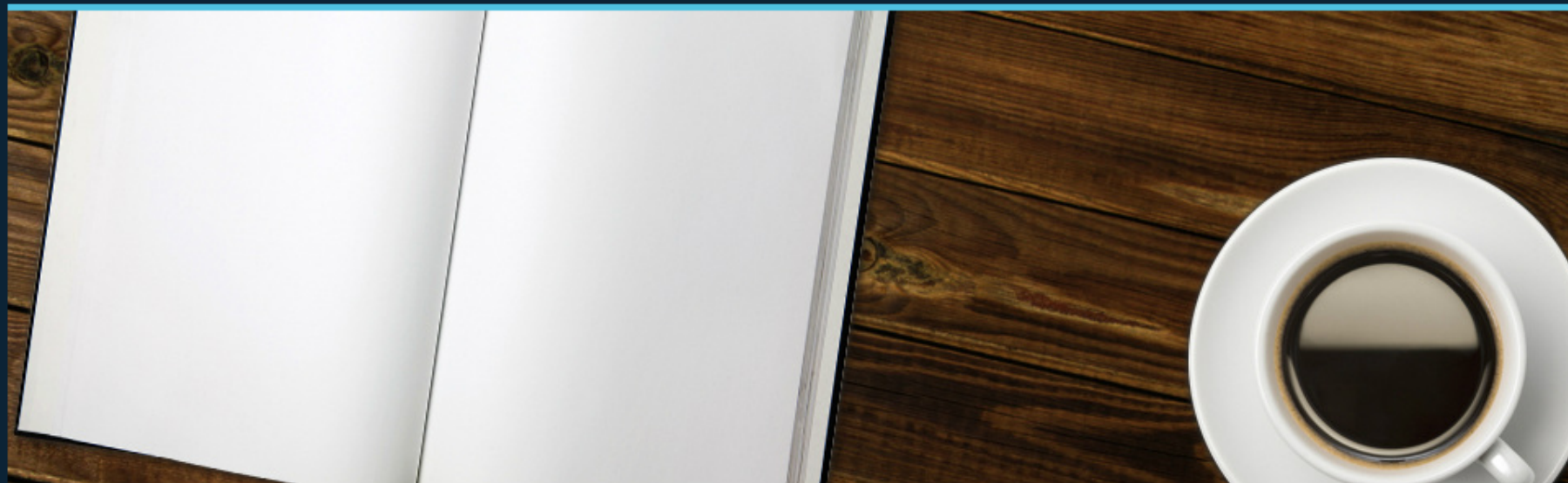


-The traffic light: it is a traffic light made with cardboard paper where the students wrote in English the previous knowledge they have in red, the things they learned in the class in yellow, and the things that were not very clear or they want to explore





IATEFL Research SIG

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Teachers Research!: Posters, Talks, Discussions

'Teachers Research!'^{*} was a special participant-centred day dedicated to research **by** teachers **for** teachers. The day was structured around short presentations by poster followed by informal discussion, in combination with commentary and discussion sessions involving Dick Allwright, Anne Burns and Donald Freeman as guest commentators (see [Programme for the day](#)). With the permission of all participants, we have made videos and photos of the day available below.



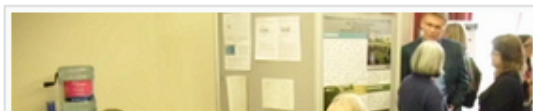
First morning session

Introduction to the Day (Richard Smith & Sarah Brewer)

Poster presentations:

- * **Christina Gkonou**
- * **Katie Moran**
- * **Becky Steven & Jessica Cobley**
- * **Esma Asuman Eray**
- * **Jayne Pearson**
- * **Bushra Ahmed Khurram**
- * **Elena Oncevska**

Commentary on these posters by Dick Allwright, Anne Burns and Donald Freeman (10 min.)





Teacher Research Updates

This section of the website showcases practitioner research conducted by language teachers and teacher educators. We are aiming to encourage sharing of experience through presentations in a wide variety of conventional and innovative formats such as video-recorded talks, podcast versions of conference presentations, newsletter articles, stories, visual diaries, more formal reports, and so on. You can access the updates uploaded so far by clicking on the links below. You can also [raise and discuss any issues you like](#) in connection with ELT teacher-research.

We have two [events](#) in 2014 dedicated to Teacher Research - let's share experiences there, too!!

Please inform [Paula Rebolledo](#) if you would like to contribute a report, presentation or article to this space. She will be happy to give you advice about possible formats.

Updates so far:

- Video-recorded talk: '[Exploratory Practice / Action Research Experience](#)' by Katie Moran
- Article: '[Teaching Communication and Interaction Strategies. An action research project with Greek teenagers at intermediate level](#)' by Costas Gabrielatos
- [Discussion with Costas Gabrielatos about his action research project.](#)
- Article: '[Exploratory Practice: investigating my own classroom pedagogy](#)' by Yasmin Dar
- Video-recorded presentation: '[Combining learner autonomy and practitioner research through Exploratory Practice](#)' by Ana Inés Salvi
- 'mybrainshark' presentation and blog entry: '[Go online - getting your students to use Internet resources](#)' by Sandy Millin