Hillary Place Papers

University of Leeds

School of Education Journal

Volume 5, December 2019

Contents

Journal information page

Journal and volume

Hillary Place Papers, Volume 5 (December, 2019)

Editorial board

Stewart Gray, Stefan Vollmer, Michael Walker

University of Leeds faculty consultants

Matthew Homer, Michael Inglis

Faculty peer reviewers

Gill Main, Jackie Salter, Matthew Homer, Michael Inglis , Rachel Mathieson, Loreto Aliaga-Salas

Student peer reviewers

Sarah Cobbe, Souhila Kebassi, Stewart Gray, Stefan Vollmer, Michael Walker

Legal information

Hillary Place Papers is an open access journal, and may be downloaded and shared by anyone for non-commercial purposes. Individual contributors retain the right to be recognised as author and copyright holder for their respective works. The journal's cover image is free of copyright.

Contact e-mail: hppeditors@gmail.com

Address: School of Education, Hillary Place, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK, LS2 9JT

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Hillary Place Papers Issue 5 (2019)

The editorial team is delighted to welcome you to Issue 5 of Hillary Place Papers!

In line with previous issues, this edition contains six papers covering a range of subjects and reflecting the breadth of interests found in the educational research community.

The first paper by **Ana Ilse Benavides Lahnstein** presents a reflection on the relationship between theory and practice in education, facilitated through a professional account of an early career researcher graduated from Leeds and living in Mexico. The account briefly narrates Ana's initial experiences and some crucial learning whilst completing her PhD degree.

Alexander McMullan-Bell presents a case study on the role of audiological support in the language development of deaf learners. The paper is written to illustrate to general and non-deaf specialist educators some of the most commonly occurring struggles that deaf learners, who use their supportive technology effectively, face in language development.

A second case study presented by **Ruaa Hariri** explores the beliefs of teachers of English as a second language on learners' writing in an academic context. This was conducted through interviews with 6 teacher participants in a context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), whilst observing sample documents of teachers' written feedback on students' writing assessments.

The paper by **Abraham Gutierrez** is written with the intention of providing guidance and motivation to international students studying in the UK who want to research a problem from their home countries. The analysis and recommendations should also be of interest to lecturers and dissertation supervisors.

Narantuya Jugder presents a paper that focuses on the quality of masters level research and explains the concepts of theories regarding the evaluation of research and the analyses of dissertations against 16 criteria in seven categories at the National Academy of Governance in Mongolia.

In the final paper, **Dimah Hamad M Aldosari** presents a report on a conference on early childhood studies that featured three well-known speakers in the field of Early Childhood Studies who each discussed their recent research and projects.

Despite the differences in focus, all of the authors reflect the spirit of scholarly engagement and sharing of knowledge.

In line with Issue 4, the editorial team of post-graduate researchers worked

alongside more experienced, university faculty reviewers in order to develop their own reviewing skills. This approach has become a key feature of the process now embedded in the production process of Hillary Place Papers. The editorial team therefore wish to express their gratitude to faculty reviewers for their support and guidance.

If you are interested in getting involved in future editions as an author, reviewer or member of the editorial team, keep an eye on the website for up-dates and do take the opportunity to get involved; it's a worthy and rewarding process!

Finally, the editorial team offer their sincere thanks to the contributing authors and reviewers and invite further contributions from the educational research community.

On good intentions and the juxtaposition of educational practices

Ana Ilse Benavides-Lahnstein, Instituto de Investigación, Innovación y Estudios de Posgrado para la Educación del Estado de Nuevo León (IIIEPE), Monterrey, México

ABSTRACT: This article offers a reflection on the relationship between theory and practice in education, facilitated through a professional account of an early career researcher graduated from Leeds and living in Mexico. The account briefly narrates the initial experiences and some crucial learning the researcher had whilst completing her PhD degree. She also shares two significant post-PhD work experiences which stimulated her critical reflection on how educational practices communicate and influence each other. The description of these experiences leads to a short analysis of the relationship between educational theory and practice, identifying the overlap of practices are a crucial meeting point in this relationship. The latter is helped by the reflection of the author upon the work of Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis, choosing a few ideas from their writings on educational theory and action research to explain her thinking.

Good intentions

I had a clear intention in mind when I decided to study a PhD in education: to use research to improve the environmental education teaching practices of primary school teachers. As a research assistant, I learned that often the overall purpose of educational research projects was to support students' learning by targeting an educational practice that could be better understood and, therefore, improved. Similar intensions defined my PhD research back in late 2013; in my head, it seemed obvious and straightforward to use research to help improve teaching practices. At the time, I perceived my intentions appropriate and perhaps even honourable. Yet, eventually, my intentions started to remind me of a popular aphorism which admonishes that 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions' or 'de buenas intenciones está empedrado el infierno' ('Hell is cobbled of good intentions') — as I often hear it in Mexico. Regardless of the religious connotation of the aphorism, many find sense in this phrase because it prompts us to be critical of our intentions and the potential consequences of enacting them.

I suspect that the initial intention of my PhD might have added another cobble to the miscommunication netherworld that exists between educational theory and practice… between academic research and teaching. How did I know my research participants would share or assume my intentions? It was a good intention to want to contribute towards improving environmental education, but I am not sure how 'good' it was to assume that research, my research in this case, is a directly relevant source of learning for teachers. I realised that 'good intentions' are not good enough to improve educational practices or to strengthen the relationship between research and educational practices. For instance, 'good intentions' such as using research to improve an educational practice, depending on the research design, could fail to consider the influence of teachers' epistemologies. Nowadays, the 'good intentions' I

had when I started my PhD do not seem 'good' enough to me as they did before. I realised the improvement of education is beset with 'good intentions', many of which do not bring research and teaching closer together.

What my PhD studentship did not teach me

I did not study to be a basic education teacher, but I understood what the profession entails mostly by spending some significant time talking and working along teachers in research—my own mother was a devoted preschool teacher. When I fully dived into educational research at the University of Leeds through a PhD programme, teachers and their practices further puzzled me. At Leeds, I mulled over the notions of teacher identity (e.g. Beijaard, 1995; Coldron and Smith, 1999; Gee, 2000). At some point, I got busy untangling the differences between teacher beliefs (e.g. Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996) and knowledge (e.g. Calderhead, 1996; Clandinin, 1985; Shulman, 1987; Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer, 2001) until I decided that this was not helping my study or me. So, I concluded my explorations with a broader outlook of teacher cognitions and an assortment of aspects that might influence their teaching practice (Borg, 2015). Leeds, Hillary Place, were surely great places to learn more about how to contribute towards improving teaching practices in environmental education, even if these places did not have a strong research body in this field.

The PhD training at Leeds often encouraged interdisciplinary exchanges between students of different faculties. Their training formats and the support to carry out student-led activities and events enhanced these exchanges. We were also encouraged to think hard on our role as researchers, for instance, challenging and inspiring our understanding of reflexivity in qualitative research (i.e. Berger, 2015; Seale, 1999; and Smartt, 2016). Moreover, the research culture in Leeds pushed me to become competent at communicating with policy makers — a high level competence that requires ongoing motivation and practice. The aforesaid opportunities, alongside my studies, made me feel like I had consolidated my research interests and practice as an educational researcher. Nevertheless, once I was back to an academic work life in education, I realised that there were other significant aspects left for me to consolidate.

After completing my PhD, I pondered the tired and perhaps dull question of "how do teachers and educational researchers work together-together?" I was puzzled by "how can the relationship between educational researchers and teachers evolve beyond the centrality of research findings?" Or, how can research be assumed in teaching and the other way around? Was participatory action research the closer answer? All this and more was left for me to figure out. It was my responsibility to recognise the gaps between theory and practice. In the following section, I will narrate a personal account of two recent academic experiences that illustrate how I arrived at these questions.

A juxtaposition of practices

It had been less than a year after finishing my PhD in 2018 when I was lucky enough

to find myself back in Mexico and having new academic work experiences. These academic experiences include doing two very different jobs at two strikingly different research institutes. At the centre of these experiences were basic education teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers. To be true, I was a peripheral spectator rather than an actor playing a central role in these scenarios. My marginal participation was deliberate, but also constrained by both my lack of practical experience in teacher education and the power differentials of these places. The first experience I describe happened in an institute led by researchers, including educational researchers. The second experience took place in a teacher education research institute. Both institutes had developed educational research for over ten years, thus, they were fairly new institutions. Together, these experiences portray the relationship between research and educational practices in a contrasting way.

Researchers leading teacher education practices

Working at an interdisciplinary institute led by researchers is one of the most enriching work experiences I have had; it was great to experience research beyond my area of expertise. In this place there were highly experienced researchers of different fields 'walking about', weekly seminars led by students and researchers, an atmosphere of true respect for productive academic work, a general attitude showing little stress over social protocols and dress codes. The main requirement there was to effectively and ethically contribute to whatever research you were involved in.

At this place, I was working as a postdoctoral scholar in a new researcher-led programme that was aimed at the professional development of in-service science schoolteachers. The research group and the structure of the selective programme provided learning experiences that the curriculum and the diversity of the people enrolled maximised. Teachers working at any of the basic education levels (the equivalent of early years to Key Stage 5) and from different places in Mexico and other countries could enrol in the programme. Likewise, the experienced team of researchers grouped several accomplished partners across Mexico and from other Latin-American countries. The vast experience of the leading researchers in didactics and teacher education was another significant benefit for the teachers who enrolled in this programme. The enrolled teachers were, perhaps like never before, directly exposed to scientific and educational research practices whenever they visited or studied at the institute.

A distinctive aspect of this experience is that those full-time educational researchers were now performing as teacher educators daily, seemingly different to their experience on delivering workshops, guiding postgraduate students and teaching isolated modules. When I arrived at this programme, there was a keen interest amongst the researchers of the group to guide the student teachers through a systematic analysis of an innovative teaching lesson they had designed themselves. There was a lot of discussion between the members of the research group about how to do this guiding. At the same time, there were a few foundational problems to deal with, such as the data collection processes that the teachers had conducted

during the creating and testing of their innovative lesson. Most of them had incomplete sets of data or had data retrieved/generated from poorly designed instruments. From this point onwards, I started paying close attention to the teachers' reactions to these types of obstacles and the shifts in practice that were taking place in the teacher-researcher interactions.

I noticed that gradually, research theories and practices took over the thesis development of the teachers. This meant that the teachers' reflection processes were being guided by strategies of educational research, contrasting with the style the teachers used to innovate their practice. I was not sure if 'the research-way' was an entirely suitable approach to conduct the analysis and to report the teachers' innovative proposal. I was curious about how a teacher's practice would actually benefit from transcribing interviews or creating a data balance. Also, I could not fully grasp the knowledge and methods that were privileged in this programme. How were theory and practices each informing the actions taken? My opinion is that the researchers and teachers were mildly unaware that they got caught up in a theory-practice dilemma or even worse! The paradigms of a research practice were attempting to shape the practice and learning processes of the student teachers. To me, this situation was mind-boggling. I could perceive an issue with how these research and teaching practices were 'mis-communicating', but I did not have an answer for this problem.

Teacher educators leading research practices

Eventually, in less than a year, the wind of change took me to a teachers-led research institute, where the continuous professional development of teachers was the focus of attention. By teachers-led research institute, I mean that former schoolteachers and teacher educators of long-standing careers made most of the numbers in this place. Although, this place was run by managers of varied backgrounds, often chosen based on external selection processes. The Rector of the institute did not have to be a teacher educator neither an educational researcher. The research culture of this place was not as strong as their teacher education culture. This place had strong institutional bonds with the local Secretariat of Education and other institutions across different social sectors. The strategic infrastructure of this institute combined teacher education, research, and technological development and design for the improvement of local educational practices. The formality of this place was contrasting to the relaxed protocols in the other research institute. The organisational culture of this place resembled the general culture of the state-funded teaching institutions in Mexico.

When I took on a new research position in the teachers-led institute, new frameworks were being adopted and the concept of educational practice was at the centre of the institutional reformulation. In fact, it was at this place that a prominent teacher educator introduced me to the ideas about educational theory and practice that I will discuss further ahead in this text. At that moment, the institute was searching for ways to create a strong research culture to improve the prominence of their contributions to educational research and local educational practices. The last few administrations struggled with establishing clear research areas, cohesive

research groups, and securing funding for research. I learned that in the past, their research projects mostly resembled educational interventions and political strategies, more than unbiased, exhaustive and relevant investigations. Previous research reports show there was a confusion on what it was an investigation or a research project. The systematic approach, methodological rigour, and ethical features typical of educational research were not clear in the research reports I got to read. There was a real need to leave the old habits behind and develop new research that served international standards as it contributed to local educational practices. This was almost the flipside of what I perceived at the other research institute: the theoretical and practical assumptions of a teaching culture were ruling their research practices.

The ways of planning, developing, and assessing research at this place seemed strikingly different from the other institute. Likewise, their approach to teacher education was mostly divergent to what I experienced at the other institution. By talking to the people there and learning about the previous work they did for teacher education, I realised that they were mindful of teachers' practices and their contexts. Their vast experience in teaching, teacher education, and educational management was intriguing to me. I could not fully understand the architecture of their practices in teaching and research. I was neither sure if the old research habits of this place were left behind nor if a vast majority noticed there was a strong bias in the way they conducted their research.

Paving a way for reflexive intentions: an ecology of practices

My appraisal of the two experiences narrated above is that there is no right or wrong in these situations; perhaps, the experiences that I narrated just represent an unfortunate, though well-intended, miscommunication of practices. The two experiences present an intricate dilemma relevant for educational researchers, school authorities, teacher educators, and schoolteachers. I do not think there is a right path to follow when two different practices need to 'understand each other', though, I found some 'initial leads' or answers to this in Carr (2002) and Kemmis and Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, et al. (2014). The latter references are two texts written by a group of scholars who have been working for decades on educational philosophy and action research. Through them, I identify 'initial leads' on the relationship between theory and practice and on how different practices influence each other when trying to solve shared educational problems.

Using a persuasive argument, Carr (2002) contends that educational theory is originated within practice and by a particular practice; he rejects the notion that a theory can be 'applied' to inform, shape, and derive a practice. Carr meant that any educational theory created outside its field of action is only artificially relevant for educational practice. Therefore, the context of a practice and what we do in a practice both should inform the theories we use/create for the practice in question. Educational theories that aim to be effective are (ideally) created 'within' its field of action and credit educational practice with theoretical attributes. This is why theories created within the research arena might differ from the educational theories that emerge from teaching; this is partly why researchers and teachers have trouble merging their frameworks to collaborate. According to Carr (2002),

educational theory should aim to improve the rationality of practices by "critically evaluating the adequacy of the concepts, beliefs, basic assumptions and values that are part of the most outstanding theories of educational practice" (p. 58). I perceive the effectiveness of the theories underlying the practices of the two situations I describe in this text was compromised because dominant paradigms misled the rationality of their practices.

I do not have a clear idea of how the critical evaluation of the relationship between theory and practice that is suggested by Carr (2002) could look like in action. I do, however, understand that the theories and practices around an educational problem or educational event should work together to solve it. Practices inform practices, although Kemmis and colleagues (2014) would probably say it differently: how theory and practice relate is also the product of the "ecology of practices". Based on the work of Fritjof Capra and his work on ecology and community, Kemmis and colleagues (2014) propose that 'the sayings, doings, and relatings of a practice' become the architecture that enables or hinders another practice (p.43).

My post-PhD experiences in the two research institutes brought the notion of 'ecology of practices' to life, although at the time I did not know what to call it. The two experiences I described in this text involve cultural systems of practice that are interdependent yet, in these examples, the practices and methodologies of a dominant culture imposed on another. In both examples, I identify there was an awkward 'architecture' hindering the effective merging of two different practices that share an educational purpose. Missing an open and critical assessment of the shared commitment to education weakened the theoretical and methodological strengths of the research and teaching cultures of the two places. Here, the key was in how the educational practices of each culture or 'system' interacted, suggesting that good shared intentions are not enough if the suitability of the theories, context, and actions that are being used to improve a practice are not openly agreed upon and studied.

In an introduction to Carr's work (2002), Kemmis, from a Habermasian perspective, observes that social relations and structures, rather than theory alone, are the main drivers of professional practices. Kemmis discriminates individual and public processes of interaction that influence the relationship between theory and practice. My work experiences confirm the latter through examples of public processes and social structures which influenced the interactions and resulting work of researchers and teachers or teachers doing research for teachers. The organisation and negotiation that happened or the lack of public processes in these practices affected the collaborations between research and teaching. A silent theory-practice debate permeated their practices and shared commitment to education; this was a symptom of their mild disregard for the social relations and structures acting out in the ecology of their educational practices. This how I think distance between theory and practice and from practice to practice can divert 'good intentions', allowing long detours away from the educational problems at hand.

Some final thoughts

I perceive that much of my career path in education was informed by many 'good intentions', some of which were mine and some borrowed from others. This does not mean that I believe that all the students who devote years of their life to a PhD in Education are gullible and hold uncritical good intentions. In fact, many would already have a realistic picture of their field of interest by the time they start their PhD. Nevertheless, it can be difficult to identify the complicated ties of educational theory and practice. This involves the challenge of learning that knowledge exchanges in education have multiple sources and depend upon intricate social interactions. Besides, understanding the meeting points in the relationship between educational theory and practice is difficult regardless of your position, if you have been a teacher for a substantial period or if you have done a lot of academic work away from the demands of a classroom.

For many, the debate around the relationship between theory and practice is old, but for an early career researcher of Latin-American background it came as a surprise to find these treasures of discussion. Now, by no means do I trick myself into thinking this is a successful summary of the lifetime work of Carr and Kemmis or that my writing portrays the criticism that they have received (e.g. Misawa, 2011; Moore, 1981). Yet, I dared to present a rough sketch of my ideas because I hope these inspire others who are wondering about similar aspects or experiencing/witnessing comparable circumstances. I am sure that I will ponder the relationship of research and teaching for a long time; I will question if critical research approaches can sufficiently provide a framework for uniting these practices. These questions are important because our 'practice' demands us to task ourselves with the endless debates on the relationship between theory and practice. Engaging in debates on these matters might help us examine our 'good intentions' and turn them into productive actions to improve the communication of our educational practice ecosystem.

References

Beijaard, D. 1995. Teachers' prior experiences and actual perceptions of professional identity. *Teachers and Teaching*. **1**(2), pp.281–294.

Berger, R. 2015. Now I see it, now I don´t: researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*. **15**(2), pp.219–234.

Borg, S. 2015. *Teacher cognition and language education: research and practice*. London: Bloomsbury.

Calderhead, J. 1996. Teachers: Beliefs and knowledge. In: D. C. Berliner & R. C. Calfee. ed(s). *Handbook of educational psychology*. London, England: Prentice Hall International, pp. 709–725.

Clandinin, J. 1985. Personal practical knowledge: a study of teachers' classroom images. *Curriculum Inquiry*. **15**(4), pp.361–385.

Carr, W. 2002. *Una teoría para la educación*. 3rd ed. Madrid: Ediciones Morata.

Coldron, J. and Smith, R. 1999. Active location in teachers' construction of their professional identities. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*. **31**(6), pp.711–726.

Gee, J. 2000. Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*. **25**, pp.99–125.

Kagan, D. 1992. Implication of Research on Teacher Belief. *Educational Psychologist*. **27**(1), pp.65–90.

Kemmis, S., Wilkinson, J., Edwards-Groves, C., Hardy, I., Grootenboer, P. & Bristol, L. 2014. *Changing practices, changing education*. New York: Springer.

Misawa, K. 2011. The Hirst-Carr Debate Revisited: Beyond the Theory-Practice Dichotomy. *The Journal of Philosophy of Education*, **45**(4), pp. 599–702.

Moore, M. 1981. Relations between Theory and Practice: A Critique of Wilfred Carr's Views. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, **5**(2), pp. 44–56.

Nespor, J. 1987. The roles of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies.* 19(4), pp.317–328.

Pajares, M. 1992. Teachers' beliefs and educational research: cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*. **62**(3), pp.307–332.

Richardson, V. 1996. The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In: J. Sikula. ed. *Handbook of research on teacher education*. 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan, pp. 102–119.

Seale, C. 1999. *The quality of qualitative research*. London: SAGE Publications.

Shulman, L. 1987. Knowledge and teaching: foundations of the new reform. Harvard *Educational Review*. **57**(1), pp.1–22.

Smartt, J. 2016. *Writing ethnography*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Verloop, N., Van Driel, J. and Meijer, P. 2001. Teacher knowledge and the knowledge base of teaching. *International Journal of Educational Research*. **35**(5), pp.441–461.

Author: Ana Benavides Lahnstein studied an Industrial Engineering degree and Master's degree in Education at Universidad TecMilenio in Mexico. Ana obtained her PhD in Education in 2018 by the University of Leeds, UK. Her research experience and academic publications are based on her collaboration in national and international science education and environmental education research projects. Her recent work experiences include a postdoctoral position in Cinvestav-Monterrey and her current role as Research Officer in IIIEPE, Mexico.

Email: benavides.lahnstein@gmail.com

The role of audiological support in the language development of deaf learners: Research and practise to inform outcomes

Alexander McMullan-Bell, Eastbury Community School, London, UK

ABSTRACT: This case study is written to illustrate to general and non-deaf specialist educators some of the most commonly occurring struggles that deaf learners, who use their supportive technology effectively, face in language development. Specifically, it addresses the impact of audiological support on the language development of a secondary age profoundly deaf learner. I will focus on the hierarchy of listening skills and assess the learner's abilities within the four main areas of detection, discrimination, identification, and comprehension. These assessments of his listening skills were conducted in two different educational environments and with different audiological support in place to provide points of comparison. I collected data in these areas so that I was able to examine the collection for challenges and opportunities within his learning and development of language. This paper concludes that case studies such as this allow educators and practitioners to pinpoint barriers in the listening process in order to place support strategies. This paper highlights the distinction between the role of audiology in supporting audiological access to language and cognitive development and understanding of language. The student used here stands as an example for non-deafness specialists as to the challenges deaf learners come across when trying to develop language.

Introduction:

With this case study, I focussed on the audiological support in place to support a particular student's listening skills and abilities that will then impact his spoken language. The student used within this case study is a secondary pupil currently in year 8 and 12 years old. He is educated in a mainstream school with a specialist Deaf Additional Resource Provision (ARP) attached for the education of deaf learners with severe to profound deafness, some with complex needs. My role within the school is that of a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) and as such one of my principle roles is to continually monitor our deaf learner's progress and attempt to pinpoint barriers or successes in their development. One of the areas we need to continuously review is the current audiological technology and support in place so that ToDs have a clear understanding of audiological options that are to best support students, demonstrate that we can undertake the audiological management of a student and that we understand how the appropriate audiological support can potentially benefit a child's spoken language development. Language acquisition and development are likely to be a major barrier for deaf learners (Marschark and Hauser, 2012) because we learn our native language as we grow by listening to the language that surrounds us during childhood (Crystal, 2006). Even with audiological support from hearing aids and cochlear implants, deafness means some deaf learners struggle to access the spoken language of their native environments (Marschark and Hauser, 2012).

Before we go into the case study itself, it is important to clarify some key terms that some outside of deaf education may not be familiar with. **Figure 1** shows the range of human hearing; with the pitch being measured along the top from left (low pitch) to right (high pitch) and measured in hertz (Hz) while volume is measured in decibels

(dB) from the top (soft sounds) to bottom (loud sounds). The student in question is classified as being profoundly deaf meaning that on average their hearing level falls below 90 decibels (dB) which is exceptionally low in comparison with normal hearing which falls into the average of around 0dBs. To put this into context, without the support of hearing aid technology the student can hear vehicles passing close by, however, would not be able to hear any speech sounds, human or animal movement or noises, or distant noises without the support of hearing aid technology. Hearing aids can support access to surrounding language in deaf learners who do have some amount of residual hearing, meaning the hearing they do have after their threshold of deafness, however it does not impact on the understanding of the language around them (Marschark and Hauser, 2012). The speech sounds we make fall between 20dB and 50dB as can be seen in **Figure 1** where we can see plotted the letter sounds and where they fall on the graph, this area where speech sounds fall is known as the "speech banana". This means that without audiological support a profoundly deaf learner who cannot hear about 90dB will struggle to access speech sounds.
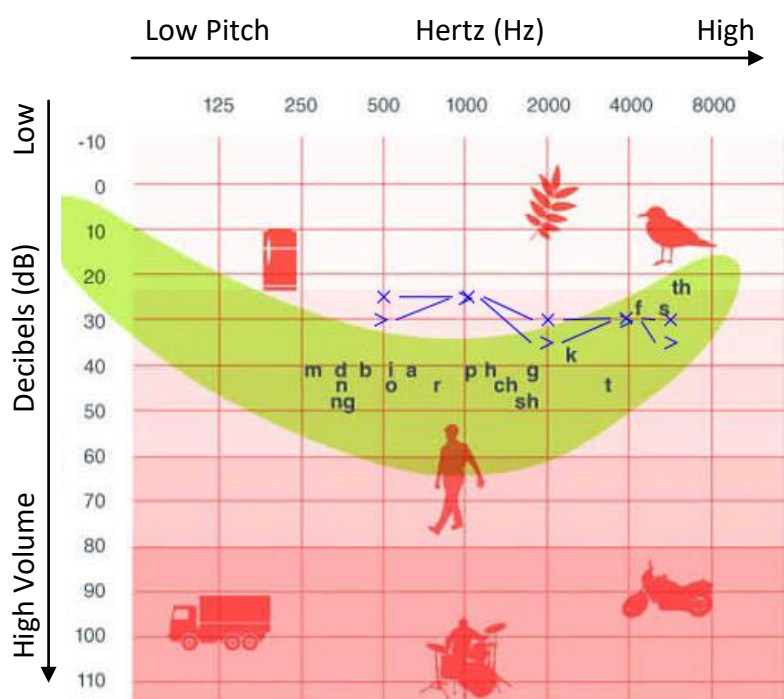
Figure 1: Left and Right Ear Audiograms (Aided) with Speech Banana

In this case study I aim to create a case study that can focus on two main points. Firstly, can a case study on a pupil's audiological support provide us as practitioners with an insight into barriers the learner may be facing within learning environments? Secondly, can the information provided from such a case study helps us pinpoint which listening skill (Madell, 2014) is a particular barrier for that individual pupil.

Baseline information:

The student whom I am writing about in this case study will be known as Simon.

Simon has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which details both his background and his needs when it comes to education. Simon has a bilateral profound sensorineural hearing loss and according to his EHCP began using hearing aids at 3 months and was implanted with two cochlear implants when he was 2 years and 2 months. Cochlear implants are "sophisticated" (Marschark and Hauser, 2012, p31) hearing aids which involves an implant in the head of a deaf individual and an external device which works like a hearing aid and sends electrical impulses to the implant which then sends them to the brain while the external device is secured to the individuals implant by a magnet (Marschark and Hauser, 2012). Being implanted at such a young age should, theoretically, have given Simon an appropriate amount of time to develop his speech perception. Gstoettner et al. (2000) found in their study that speech perception in congenital or prelingual deaf children improves steadily over time from the point of implantation which implies that now, at age 12 years and 6 months, Simon should have a fairly good perception of speech. However, the Gstoettner et al. (2000) study, although claiming to focus on all auditory skills from detection to comprehension, does few tests that do actually look at the comprehension of the language being heard and they themselves state that not all children completed all assessments. This could mean that although their data does show that prelingually deaf children do improve their auditory skills of detection and discrimination this may not mean that they comprehend the words and sounds that they are hearing.

Using the information provided to the school from Simon's Hospital reports we know that he has a profound hearing loss and that he has been implanted with two cochlear implants, and processors manufactured by the company Naida, which should provide him with access to all speech sounds as seen in **Figures 2** and **Figure 3** below which were made using the Audiogram creator by Hearing Aid Know (2006). These sound-field tests were done using warble tones, which is a sound played into the ear not being tested to ensure that the test sound is only picked up by the ear being tested, to measure the quietest sound Simon could hear and were done with one processor on at a time. When testing people hearing audiologists will usually test at 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz, 4000Hz, and 6000Hz, so keep the assessment in a range that is comfortable for the person being tested, as well as practical to listen to.
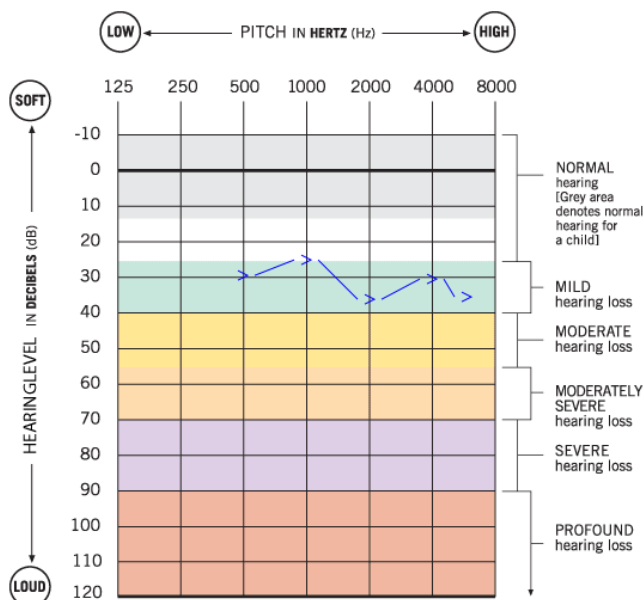
Figure 2: Right Ear Audiogram (Aided)
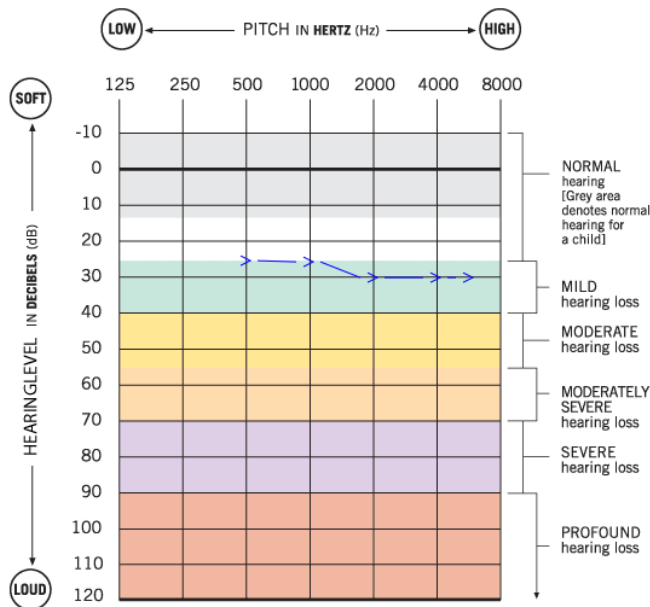
Figure 3: Left Ear Audiogram (Aided)

Frequency Hz	500	1000	2000	4000	6000
Right Processor (dB Hearing Level)	=30	=25	=35	=30	=35
Left Processor (dB Hearing Level)	=25	=25	=30	=30	=30

Figure 4: Data from Audiograms

The data from the Audiograms shows us that on average Simon's aided hearing is significantly higher than when he is unaided as his right ear averages 31dB and his left ear 28db. We also see when the audiograms are overlaid onto the "Speech Banana" (**Figure 1**), which is the banana-shaped area drawn out on audiograms which demonstrates where speech sounds occur due to their volume and pitch (Klangpornkun, Onsuwan, Tantibundhit, Pitathawatchai, 2013), that Simon should be able to detect the vast majority of the speech sounds. However these audiograms were conducted in a hospital under clinical conditions and therefore may not be reflective of Simon's hearing within School environments as even with such support from his implants providing him with increased access to sound, and particularly speech sounds, he is still delayed in his spoken language.

From Simon's current Assessment Tracker (AT), which contains assessment data, conducted by myself and the other TOD in the school, and from his Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) report we have some starting knowledge about Simon's language levels. The SaLT for our particular student reports having completed Renfrew's (1988) Action Picture Test (RAPT) with Simon as this assessment is designed to explore his abilities to express ideas and concepts through spoken language through showing him picture scenes and asking specific questions and see how well Simon can express his understanding of what is happening in them (NDCS, 2017). From the table below (**Figure 5**) we can see the results of this assessment

conducted by the SaLT.

Date of Assessment:	02/07/18
Chronological Age	11;11
Information Score (Age Equivalent)	Raw Score 35.5/40 (7;00-7;05)
Grammar Score (Age Equivalent)	Raw Score: 26/37 (6;00-6;05)

Figure 5

From these results, we can see that Simon's productive expressive language is significantly behind his chronological age. The results show that at the age of 11 years and 11 months he is expressing the information of an equivalent 7-year-old with the grammar and syntax of an equivalent 6-year-old. As a Teacher of the Deaf my job it to ask 'why is Simon's Language delayed like this?' and 'What can we do to help close this gap and support him?'.

For this case study I have explored what can be done from an audiological perspective to support Simon's productive spoken language, meaning the language he uses for verbal communication and for this we need to ask ourselves some questions about Simon that need to be explored. Our main question overall is 'How good are Simon's listening skills and how well is he able to use the skills he has in his school environments?' For us to be able to form any conclusions about this question we need to break it down into more individual components which are:

1. How well is Simon able to detect individual words within spoken language within school environments?
2. How well can he discriminate the variations in sounds within the words in these differing school environments and identify the words associated with these sounds?
3. How well does Simon comprehend the words spoken within these environments?

These three questions focus on the main aspects of our innate listening ability and cognitive listening skills: detection, discrimination, identification, and comprehension (Madell, 2014) meaning that the answering of these questions should give us a clear overview of Simon's sound and speech perception and, theoretically, give us an indication of where barriers to listening and spoken languages occur, if there are barriers. I have assessed each of the areas separately with their specific assessments, although discrimination and identification have been combined for the process of assessment, and then they are considered all together in the end of this paper.

Detection: Introduction

Knoors and Marschark (2014) believed that children develop their language through

social interaction and communication, and that effective and efficient interactions and communication help promote effective and productive language development. Swanwick (2017) added that through conversing in a shared language children develop their understanding and gain meaning to words and concepts. However it is difficult for deaf learners to develop a spoken language if they are unable to hear it (Knoors and Marschark, 2014) and therefore we need to ensure that deaf learners within our learning environments have the best possible support in order for them to detect the words which make up the language happening around them. Now although hearing aids and cochlear implants don't in themselves support the understanding of language (Marschark and Hauser, 2012) they support deaf children with their awareness of language and sound around them and therefore provide them with the option of engaging in social interactions (Marschark, Hauser, 2012). With Simon's situation, I investigated how well Simon can detect the words being spoken around him within a school environment. There have been times at school where I and other staff have observed Simon either missing instructions or content, or being unsure about what is going on around him or why. Now this may be purely due to lack of attention on Simon's part. However we do need rule out that Simon is not missing things due to being unable to detect language due to his audiological support.

Detection: Method and results

Therefore to assess Simon's detection skills I used the Arthur Boothroyd (AB) Short Word List (Boothroyd, 1968) and is made up of "15 lists of 10 monosyllabic, consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words" (Myles, 2017, p.871) with words such as fish, heel, and dip. I assessed Simon using the lists in four different ways: The first assessment was done at the back of a mainstream classroom to simulate background noise Simon would experience in one of his mainstream classes; I then did it a second time in the mainstream but with an Assistive Listening Device (ALD) and the third and fourth tests were conducted at the back of a classroom within our Deaf Additional Resource Provision (ARP) with and without an ALD so we can see if there is a difference in his detection between him in a mainstream class environment and an ARP class environment. Myles (2017) states that in Australia the vast majority of Audiologists use this assessment and 96% of the Audiologists surveyed use this as a tool for detection because they use it as a way of cross checking the child's audiogram (Myles, 2017), such as **Figures 2** and **Figure 3**. This should imply that it is a sensible choice of assessment for me to use. However we should take into account that the practise of Australian Audiologists may not necessarily reflect the best practise of Audiologists here in the UK. It is also worth mentioning that the majority of these Australian Audiologists had issues with the scoring system used in this assessment as although the phonemes of these CVC words are supposedly individual they do change and are modified by the phonemes preceding and/or following them (Myles, 2017). However, with this in mind I still went ahead and used the AB Short Word List as it is an assessment which is practical in its delivery, engaging for the student, and, with the aid of video recording, means I can score phoneme by phoneme. This assessment also provides me an accurate idea of Simon's detection abilities and potentially data on sounds he is consistently not detecting.

The first assessments conducted were done within Simon's mainstream English classroom during a lesson, with the teacher's permission. In the classroom I sat myself in front of him and appropriate distance away to replicate where the teacher usually teaches from, in this case I was sat near the interactive screen at the front of the class with Simon in his usual seat on the front row. When reciting the word list I attempted to keep my voice around the 60 decibel (dB) mark throughout and I had my lips covered to prevent Simon from lip reading. While I conducted the assessments Simon's teacher continued her usual lesson with no adaptations or alterations to what she normally does. For list 6 and 8, as seen in **Figure 6**, I was wearing the ALD that Simon is usually issued with and wore it with the microphone in the appropriate place for maximum clarity. During the whole lesson I had a sound level meter monitoring the surrounding sound levels and within the mainstream classroom environment the average dB level was 70.3 dB with a highest maximum of 85.6dB. The results of these assessments are shown below (**Figure 6**). In both sets of tables (**Figure 6** and **Figure 7**) 'NR' stands for No Response, an 'X' means they did not produce the sound accurately, and an 'O' means they did produce the sound accurately.

From a glance at these results from the mainstream classroom environment we can see that Simon missed more than 50% of the CVC sounds when in the mainstream classroom without an ALD, but with the ALD this increased. So with a mean average result of 45.0% without an ALD and an average of 61.5% with an ALD we can see that there is a potential benefit of around 16.5% in CVC sounds heard when the student is using an ALD in a mainstream classroom environment. The next set of results (**Figure 7**) show how Simon scored within an ARP classroom environment, which is where deaf learners are educated outside of the mainstream environment.

The second group of assessments were conducted within a classroom within the ARP during a lesson of Simon's deaf peers. I attempted to keep conditions as similar to the first set of assessments as possible, therefore the person delivering the lesson did not alter anything from their usual style of teaching. I sat opposite Simon at a usual distance he would be from the teaching, which was similar to the distance he would be in a mainstream classroom anyway, and I endeavoured to keep my voice at a 60dB level and covered my lips to prevent Simon from lip reading. I also took dB readings for the environment during the lesson and found the ARP classroom had a sound level on average of 62.9dB with a maximum of 79.8dBs showing that the ARP classroom environment is significantly quieter than a mainstream environment by an average of 7.4dB.

Looking at the results of the AB word lists completed within the ARP classroom environment we can see that the results overall are significantly higher than they were in the mainstream classroom environment. Without an ALD Simon is detecting an average of 71.5% of spoken sounds as opposed to the 45% average, he was hearing in mainstream without an ALD and implies that, when not using an ALD, that Simon is detecting on average 26.5% more speech sounds in the ARP environment. With an ALD in the ARP Simon is detecting an average of 88% which is higher than when he used an ALD in the mainstream environment which averages out at 61.5%,

	List 2			List 5			List 6			List 8		
	Mainstream Classroom environment with no ALD.			Mainstream Classroom environment with no ALD.			Mainstream Classroom environment with an ALD.			Mainstream Classroom environment with an ALD.		
	Voice Level dB (Average)	60db		Voice Level dB (Average)	60db		Voice Level dB (Average)	60db		Voice Level dB (Average)	60db	
	Target	Resp.	Score	Target	Resp	Score	Target	Resp	Score	Target	Resp	Score
1	Fish	NR	XXX	Fib	NR	XXX	Fill	Feel	OXO	Bath	Bath	OOO
2	Duck	NR	XXX	Thatch	App	XOX	Catch	Crash	OXX	Hum	Hug	OOX
3	Gap	Gap	OOO	Sum	Sun	OOX	Thumb	Thumb	OOO	Dip	Dig	OOX
4	Cheese	Cheese	OOO	Heel	Hill	OXX	Heap	Hit	OXX	Five	Five	OOO
5	Rail	Play	XXX	Wide	Why	OXX	Wise	Wide	OXX	Ways	Waste	OXX
6	Hive	High	OOX	Rake	Brake	XOO	Rave	Gray	XOX	Reach	Meet	XXX
7	Bone	Bird	OXX	Goes	Go	OOX	Goat	Got	OXO	Joke	Joke	OOO
8	Wedge	NR	XXX	Shop	Shop	OOO	Shone	Shoe	OXX	Noose	Oops	XOX
9	Moss	Fox	XOX	Vet	Bet	XOO	Bed	Bed	OOO	Got	Got	OOO
10	Tooth	Tooth	OOO	June	NR	XXX	Juice	just	OXX	Shell	Shell	OOO
	Total	13		Total	14		Total	16		Total	21	
	Score %	43%		Score %	47%		Score %	53%		Score %	70%	

Figure 6

this is also lower than his 71.5% that he detects without the ALD in the ARP environment. Overall we can see that Simon's detection is greatest when learning within an ARP classroom environment and using an ALD to assist him with detection. This may be due to the lower background noise within in the ARP environments and the fact that the ALD cuts out some of the background noise and provides speech

	List 11			List 13			List 14			List 15		
	ARP Classroom environment with no ALD.			ARP Classroom environment with no ALD.			ARP Classroom environment with an ALD.			ARP Classroom environment with an ALD.		
	Voice Level dB(A)	60db		Voice Level dB(A)	60db		Voice Level dB(A)	60db		Voice Level dB(A)	60db	
	Target	Resp.	Score	Target	Resp.	Score	Target	Resp.	Score	Target	Resp.	Score
1	Man	Man	OOO	Kiss	Kiss	OOO	Wish	Wish	OOO	Hug	Hug	OOO
2	Hip	Hic	OOX	Buzz	Buzz	OOO	Dutch	Dutch	OOO	Dish	Dish	OOO
3	Thug	Dull	XOX	Hash	Cash	XOO	Jam	Jam	OOO	Ban	Ban	OOO
4	Ride	Wide	XOO	Thieve	Been	XXX	Heath	Heath	OOO	Rage	Rage	OOO
5	Siege	Sepge	OXO	Gate	Gate	OOO	Laze	Laze	OOO	Chief	Chief	OOO
6	Veil	Rail	XXO	Wife	Wife	OOO	Bike	Bike	OOO	Pies	Pies	OOO
7	Chose	Chose	OOO	Pole	Hole	XOO	Rove	Rose	OOX	Wet	Wet	OOO
8	Shoot	Shoot	OOO	Wretch	Wretch	OOO	Pet	Pet	OOO	Cove	Cole	OOX
9	Web	Web	OXX	Dodge	Dodge	OOO	Fog	Frog	XOO	Loose	Miss	XXX
10	cough	Cup	OXX	Moon	Moo	OOX	Soon	Soon	OOO	Moth	Mouth	OXO
	Total	19		Total	24		Total	28		Total	25	
	Score %	63%		Score %	80%		Score %	93%		Score %	83%	

Figure 7

directly to Simon's cochlear implants. As I will state in my targets later in this case study, I would recommend from this that for Simon to have the best chance of detecting speech sounds in lessons that he be taught within an ARP classroom environment wherever possible and in all lessons he use an ALD to assist further.

Discrimination and Identification: Introduction

Once I had an understanding of Simon's potential abilities to detect I needed to explore how well he can distinguish between sounds and then how well he can use this. It is important to understand what we mean when we use the terms discrimination and identification within this section of the study. Within the subject

of speech perception we mean that they can hear contrasting sounds whereas identification asks them to then use their cognitive abilities to form connections between these sounds and the meaning behind them (Govaerts et al., 2006). The skills to discriminate sounds begins around the age of four weeks starting with certain vowels and consonants (Crystal, 2006) while the ability to identify develops alongside our cognitive abilities. Therefore at this point we see the assessments move from assessing skills that we have innately as new-borns, our detection and discrimination, into assessing abilities which require significantly more cognitive skill, our ability to identify and understand (Govaerts et al., 2006). Therefore in this section I conducted an assessment which tells me how well Simon can discriminate between similar sounds and identify the meaning of the spoken sounds.

Discrimination and Identification: Method and Results

To conclude Simon's abilities in these areas I conducted the McCormick Toy Test which was created in 1977 by Professor Barry McCormick OBE (Soundbyte Solutions, 2001) and is widely used by professionals with students aged two and above. This test is usually done to provide comparative data between situations as it can be done easily and quickly and is generally found to be engaging for the children (Lovett etal., 2013). The test involves the students being presented with up to 14 objects which are all set and paired; each pair are similar sounding words with variations in consonants but a similar diphthong (Soundbyte Solutions, 2001). For the test either the tester or a recorded voice will state the name of one of the objects and the child has to identify which object has been stated (Lovett, Summerfield, Vickers, 2013) and the child is marked on how many they correctly identify. This test asks the student to listen to the variations in sounds and identify which word was stated accurately. Although this assessment is widely used by professionals working with deaf children of all levels of deafness its reliability has only been measured with those with "normal" (Lovett etal., 2013, p378) hearing or with a mild deafness meaning that potentially the reliability may change for those who take part and have a greater degree of deafness (Lovett etal., 2013) like Simon. However with the support of his cochlear implants Simon's deafness does fit into this category of hearing loss and therefore I deemed it an appropriate assessment to be conducted with Simon.

To conduct these assessments I tried my best to make the environmental factors as similar to the first as possible. This involved conducting the assessments in the same mainstream classroom in which I did the AB short word lists during the same lesson and with both myself and Simon sat in the same place. The second set was also done in the same ARP classroom, I conducted them in the same place, during the same lesson and, Simon and I were sat in the same place. This should make the data from these assessments and the previous assessments comparable as they were conducted under the same conditions and mean any variations which affected the results affected both equally. The following tables (**Figure 8** and **Figure 9**) both show the results of the assessments. Words in bold and underlined represent the words said incorrectly.

We can see from the results collected from the mainstream environment (**Figure 8**)

that Simon, like in the detection assessments, performs better with his ALD as he scored an average of 90% accuracy with it compared to his 60% average without it in the mainstream environment. This 30% variation between with ALD and without re-enforces my statement from previously that Simon's listening and auditory perception is bolstered and re-enforced with the support of his ALD and should be being used whenever Simon is being educated within a mainstream environment.

The results conducted within the ARP lesson, with and without ALD show improvements to performance during the assessment as it did with the AB word list.

Mainstream Classroom environment with no ALD.		Mainstream Classroom environment with no ALD.		Mainstream Classroom environment with an ALD.		Mainstream Classroom environment with an ALD.	
Speech Level (Average)	60dB	Speech Level (Average)	60dB	Speech Level (Average)	60dB	Speech Level (Average)	60dB
Target	Response	Target	Response	Target	Response	Target	Response
Horse	Horse	Plate	Plate	Cow	**Horse**	Horse	Horse
Plane	**Plate**	Horse	**Fork**	Spoon	Spoon	Plane	Plane
House	House	Spoon	Spoon	Fork	Fork	Man	Man
Tree	**Shoe**	Cow	Cow	Lamb	Lamb	Tree	Tree
Cup	Cup	Shoe	Shoe	Duck	Duck	Duck	Duck
Plate	Plate	Tree	**Shoe**	House	House	House	House
Key	**Shoe**	Duck	**Man**	Plate	Plate	Spoon	Spoon
Horse	**Fork**	Cup	Cup	Shoe	**Spoon**	Cow	Cow
Man	Man	Key	**Man**	Tree	Tree	Key	Key
Duck	Duck	Lamb	Lamb	Cup	Cup	Shoe	Shoe
Score %	60%	**Score %**	60%	**Score %**	80%	**Score %**	100%

Figure 8

Simon shows an average of 90% without an ALD and scored 100% both times when using an ALD in the ARP. Although this data is excellent and we can agree that his performance improves within the ARP and with an ALD, we should not believe that Simon can correctly discriminate and identify 100% of the time when in the ARP and with an ALD. This is due to the fact that this assessment does provide the student with multiple options and therefore unlike with the AB word list they have options to select from multiple options (Lovett, Summerfield, Vickers, 2013).

Therefore, we should consider that a limitation of this assessment is that the student does have the opportunity and likely hood to guess the word spoken and guess correctly. Simon also has more of a chance to get it correct than they do with the AB word list, and thus to believe that Simon will always perfectly discriminate and identify sounds in the ARP and with an ALD would be naïve.

ARP Classroom environment with no ALD.		ARP Classroom environment with no ALD.		ARP Classroom environment with an ALD.		ARP Classroom environment with an ALD.	
Speech Level (Average)	60dB	**Speech Level (Average)**	60dB	**Speech Level (Average)**	60dB	**Speech Level (Average)**	60dB
Target	**Response**	**Target**	**Response**	**Target**	**Response**	**Target**	**Response**
Cow	Cow	Plate	Plate	Fork	Fork	Plate	Plate
Man	Man	Duck	Duck	Duck	Duck	Lamb	Lamb
Key	Key	Spoon	**NR**	Spoon	Spoon	Tree	Tree
Cup	Cup	Lamb	Lamb	Cow	Cow	Key	Key
Fork	Fork	Horse	Horse	Show	Show	Cow	Cow
Plane	Plane	Cow	Cow	Tree	Tree	Plane	Plane
House	House	Man	Man	Man	Man	Fork	Fork
Duck	Duck	Show	Show	House	House	Spoon	Spoon
Lamb	Lamb	Tree	Tree	Key	Key	Man	Man
Horse	**Fork**	Plane	Plane	Cup	Cup	House	House
Score %	90%	**Score %**	90%	**Score %**	100%	**Score %**	100%

Figure 9

Comprehension: Introduction

A language is a tool through which students are able to construct meaning and therefore develop an understanding (Swanwick, 2017) so the student needs to have a comprehension of the language they are working in to be able to develop an understanding and meaning of the concepts they are studying. This idea of language being a medium in which we begin learning is working within the sociocultural theory of mind (Swanwick, 2017) which was pioneered by Vygostsky (1978) and supported by various other researchers since. Linell (2009) re-enforces this idea of learning and development through the exchange of ideas and thoughts and therefore our language and knowledge are constructed by our cultural context and environment (Swanwick, 2017). Hence, now that we have examined how well Simon is able to receive the language within his educational environments through his audiological access, I needed to see how well he understands the spoken language he is working in.

Comprehension: Method and Results

To do this I chose to use The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) which is an assessment designed to test student's receptive skills of Standard English vocabulary and developed by Dunn and Dunn (2009). The test Dunn and Dunn (2009) developed involves showing the student four images and then the person administrating the test stating a word with links to one of the images; students are marked on their ability to correctly match the word spoken with the correct image from the four options. The limitations of this assessment are that it is one often used by professionals of all backgrounds and there is a risk that it is over-tested but to overcome this is co-ordinated with the other professionals that work with Simon to ensure that they hadn't used this within the past 6 months, which no one had. Secondly, this only focusses on a small aspect of linguistics and cognitive skills and therefore we should be careful to not make too much speculation using these results purely on their own and that this assessment should lead to further research (Dunn and Dunn, 2009).

As this assessment focusses purely on Simon's cognitive abilities I conducted this assessment differently to the ones done previously in this case study. Having established the optimum conditions for Simon's detection, discrimination and identification were within the ARP environment and with an ALD to support him I, therefore, conducted the BPVS in these conditions in an attempt to limit the audiological barriers to him accessing the assessment. This should mean Simon had the best opportunity to access the sound of the words being used in the assessment and makes the results more reliable as it focusses us more on Simon's cognitive understanding without us having to worry about audiological and phonological variables.

Record of scores:	Score:	Confidence bands:
Raw score:	60	
Standardised score:	70-	N/A to N/A
Percentile rank:	N/A	N/A to N/A
Age equivalent: (Years:Months)	4:6	N/A to 4:10

Figure 10

Looking at the results from the BPVS we can see that the results put Simon very low and in some areas he even falls before the standardised scores. We can see that from this particular assessment we can see that Simon's results standardise to an age equivalent of 4 years and 6 months which is a full 8 years below his current chronological age. These results strongly imply that Simon's main barrier to improving his spoken language lies in his understanding of the language being used around him. Marschark and Knoors (2012) state that it is still uncertain whether better access to speech, through Cochlear Implants particular, do actually provide benefits to a child's mental development as it doesn't fully capture the full emotional aspects of spoken language and that the connection between a child's spoken language and their cognitive functions are not as clear cut as they would appear to be. This may potentially link with why Simon, who with the right support has potentially very good access to spoken language, seems to be so behind with his own understanding of language.

Repercussions and outcomes of assessment:

Having assessed and established certain aspects of Simon's speech and audiological access we can begin constructing targets that can aid and improve Simon's rate of progress. As ToDs we regularly have to set and evaluate targets we have set to support the development of all our students. To do this the targets I would set would be written using the SMART format (Day and Tosey, 2011). This means that the targets are all "specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based" (Day and Tosey, 2011, p517) which should mean that the targets set are more meaningful and should, therefore, help more with any progress Simon makes. These targets can then be given to staff that work closely with Simon so they know how he can improve and help contribute evidence to him meeting these targets and they can be given to Simon himself, in student-friendly language, so that he himself is aware of how he can improve and develop. These targets set for Simon could be based on his own audiological support and responsibilities for using them. For example; ensuring he is using his ALD for a specific amount of time across a fixed period in his educational settings. These targets could also be based on his spoken language use and development, such as ensuring that he uses the 's' and 'es' sounds on word endings when pluralising as we have seen that this sound is a barrier in both his listening and speaking. These targets would, of course, have clearly defined time boundaries, success criteria to establish the successful achievement of the targets, strategies to support and clearly rationale behind them based on assessments conducted.

Conclusion

Having conducted the assessments in this case study we are able to draw some conclusions about Simon's audiological access. Firstly, we know that overall Simon performs better when using an ALD in both mainstream and ARP environments compared to when he performs without (**Figures, 6, 7, 8, & 9**). We also saw that overall he performs better in the ARP environment with an ALD compared to all other variables (**Figures, 6, 7, 8, & 9**). Secondly, we found that Simon's main barrier to spoken language development and acquisition is his level of language understanding which we saw through his results in the BPVS (**Figure 10)**. When talking with Simon during this case study process he himself has identified the barriers he finds he faces he says "When I use radio I still don't understand" showing that Simon finds his level of understanding a barrier to his language. However, a downside to the research I have conducted is that it focusses purely on single-word testing, Simon's ability to detect, discriminate and identify (Madell, 2014) may be potentially weaker when involving sentences or more complex grammar and this is something that will need further testing. Last week, at the time of writing, the school was provided with portable Sound-field to use in school with our ARP students. A sound-field is an educational tool that uses amplification to provide educations with control over their classroom's acoustic environment (Massie and Dillon, 2006). Through the use of speakers, microphones, and receivers a teacher is able to ensure that their voice is spread evenly through the teaching environment to lessen the amount of sound lost from where the teacher is presenting to where the children are sat (Massie and Dhillon, 2006). Within this first week of a four-week trial, Simon has already commented that he finds the Sound-field beneficial within the ARP environment, stating "When I use that [Sound-field] I am really clearly and easier". Show that this could potentially reinforce Simon's audiological access when used in conjunction with his ALD both in the ARP but also when in the mainstream where we have seen that he does perform lower with detection, discrimination, and identification (**Figures, 6, 7, 8, & 9**). Schafer and Thibodeau (2004) found that with a Sound field deaf adults with cochlear implants had improved speech recognition and hypothesised that this should work equally as well with deaf children. Whitmer, Brennan-Jones, and Akeroyd (2011) also found that Sound fields speech intelligibility was also improved in deaf adults. Both these pieces of research have the potential to imply that Simon could access speech more effectively in mainstream classrooms when supported by both his ALD and the sound-field. Dockrell and Sheild (2012) also found that in rooms with poor acoustics, Sound-field systems boosted students understanding of spoken language which would certainly benefit Simon. With this potential of a Sound-field to support Simon, it is worth trialling this piece of audiological equipment over the following three weeks while we have the technology. Overall it is clear that Simon does have room to further support his audiological access but it is vital to prioritise support his understanding of spoken language. Simon has good listening skills with the support of the right audiological equipment but Simon struggles to process the cognitive aspects of language and it's important to now help Simon with these skills if we want his spoken and written language use to progress at an increased rate.

Finally, I believe that there are a number of things that we can take away from this

case study and that, I hope, will be of benefit to practitioners and educators regardless of if they work as Teachers of the Deaf. If we begin by looking at the three questions we set regarding Simon and his development we wanted to see how well Simon was using his innate and cognitive listening skills within the categories of detection, discrimination, identification, and comprehension (Madell, 2014). Simon shows us a clear example of a pupil who uses his audiological equipment correctly and effectively to support his innate abilities, however still struggles with spoken language acquisition, a difficulty faced by the vast majority of deaf learners (Marschark and Hauser, 2012). This implies to us that overcoming the impact deafness has on language skills is not purely down to support of audiological technology, although as we have seen it does have a large beneficial role, but it cannot do it alone. The Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE) found that 78% of school-age deaf learners are educated within mainstream school environments without specialist attached provisions (CRIDE, 2017). This means that these learners are primarily educated by mainstream teachers who may not have any relevant experience or knowledge on deafness and its impact on education and that the pupils are seen by peripatetic ToDs. This means it is important to give mainstream educators an insight into the barriers deaf learners face and case studies such as these, that can be created with the combined effort of peripatetic ToDs and SaLTs, can give mainstream educators an insight into difficulties their students face. This case study also stresses to those who are not deafness professionals that while audiological equipment is an important and vital tool in deaf learners' support it doesn't automatically fix a student's language struggles and that for many the problem lies in the cognitive comprehension of language. This is a barrier not overcome through technology but through careful planning and intervention by educators and professionals working with the student and if this is a barrier it needs to be identified as soon as possible.

References

Boothroyd, A. 1968. Developments in speech Audiometry. *British Journal of Audiology.* **2**(1), pp. 3–10.

Crystal, D. 2006. *How language Works.* England: Penguin Books

Consortium for Research in Deaf Education. 2017. *Report for England: CRIDE report on 2016/17 survey on educational provision for deaf children in England*. [Online] [Accessed 24 November 2019] Available from: https://www.batod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads /2018/02/CRIDEE2017.pdf

Day, T. and Tosey, P. 2011. Beyond SMART? A new framework for goal setting. *Curriculum Journal*. **22**(4), pp. 515-534.

Dockrell, J. E. and Shield, B. 2012. The Impact of Sound-Field Systems on Learning and Attention in Elementary School Classrooms. *Journal of Speech, Language & Hearing Research*. **55**(4), pp. 1163-1176.

Dunn, L. M. and Dunn, D. M. 2009. *The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (Third Edition)*. London: GL Assessment Limited

Govaerts, Pj., Daemers, K., Yperman, M., De Beukelaer, C., DeSaegher, G. and De Ceaulaer, G. 2006. Auditory speech sounds evaluaton (A§E®): a new test to assess detection, discrimination and identification in hearing impairment. *Cochlear Implants International.* **7**(2), pp.92-106.

Gstoettner, W. K., Hamzavi, J., Egelierler, B. and Baumgartner, W.D. 2000. Speech Perception Performance in Prelingually Deaf Children with Cochlear Implants. *Acta Oto-Laryngologica*. **120**(2), pp. 209-213.

Hearing Aid Know. 2006. *Audiogram Creator*. [Online]. [Accessed 19 December 2018]. Available from: https://www.hearingaidknow.com/audiogram-creator

Klangpornkun, N., Onsuwan, C., Tantibundhit, C. and Pitathawatchai, P. 2013. Predictions from "Speech banana" and audiograms: Assessment of hearing deficits in Thai hearing loss patients. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*. **134**(5), pp.4132-4132

Knoors, H. and Marschark, M. 2014. *Teaching Deaf Learner*. USA:Oxford University Press.

Linell, P. 2009. *Rethinking language, mind and world dialogically: Interactional and contextual theories of human sense-making.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Lovett, R., Summerfield, Q., and Vickers, D. 2013. Test-retest reliability of the Toy Discrimination Test with a masker of noise or babble in children with hearing impairment. *International Journal of Audiology*. **52**(6), pp. 377-384

Madell, J.R. 2014. Evaluation of Speech Perception in Infants and Children. In: Madell, J. R. ed. *Pediatric audiology diagnosis, technology, and management*. Stuttgart:Thieme. pp.103-120.

Marschark, M. and Knoors, H. 2012. Educating Deaf Children: Language, Cognition, and Learning. *Deafness & Educational International*. **14**(3), pp. 136-160.

Marschark, M. and Hauser, P. C. 2012. *How Deaf Children Learn: What parents and teachers need to know.* USA: Oxford University Press.

Massie, R. and Dillon, H. 2006. The impact of sound-field amplification in mainstream cross-cultural classrooms: Part I Educational outcomes. *Australian Journal of Education*. **50**(1) pp.62-77

Myles, A. 2017. The clinical use of Arthur Boothroyd (AB) word lists in Australia: exploring evidence-based practice. *International Journal of Audiology.* **56**(11), pp.870-875

National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). 2017. *Assessing and monitoring the progress of deaf children and young people.* [Online]. London: National Deaf Children's Society. [Accessed 17 December 2018] Available from: http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/our_resources/assessments.html

Renfre, C. 1988. *The Action Picture Test*. Oxford, UK: Winslow Press.

Schafer, E. and Thibodeau, L. M. 2004. Speech Recognition Abilities of Adults Using Cochlear Implants with FM Systems. *Journal of the American Academy of Audiology*. **15**(10) pp. 678-691

Soundbyte Solutions. 2001. *McCormick Toy Test.* [Online]. [Accessed 13 Janurary 2019] Available from: https://www.soundbytesolutions.co.uk/word-lists/mccormick-toy-test/

Swanwick, R. 2017. *Languages and Languaging in Deaf Education*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. 1978. *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Whitmer, W. M., Brennan-Jones, C. G. and Akeroyd, M. A. 2011. The speech intelligibility benefit of a unilateral wireless system for hearing-impaired adults. *International Journal of Audiology.* **50**(12) pp. 905-911

Author: Alexander McMullan-Bell: Having completed his undergraduate studies in Drama at the University of Essex and his Teacher training in English at the Institute of Education. Alex qualified as a Teacher of the Deaf at the end of the 2019 academic year and is just working on his Dissertation for his MA in Deaf Education at the University of Leeds which will look for potential benefits and role of Shakespeare curriculums in helping deaf learners develop their Theory of Mind. Alex currently works as a Teacher of the Deaf at Eastbury Community School in East London within the secondary school's Deaf Additional Resource Provision.

Email: alexander_mcmullan-bell@hotmail.co.uk

Exploring EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Self-Reported Feedback Provision on Learners' Writing in an EAP Context

Ruaa Hariri, University of Leeds

Abstract: This paper reports on one case study that was designed for piloting one data collection method, mainly individual interviews. It aimed at exploring the nature of formative and summative feedback held by teachers on their learners' Second Language (L2) writing. This was conducted through carrying out interviews with 6 teacher participants in a context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), whilst observing sample documents of teachers' written feedback on students' writing assessments. Based on participants' self-reported practice, the semi-structured interview method served in gaining an initial understanding of teachers' beliefs about feedback. Testing the interview questions had contributed to the validity of the research tool in terms of adequately addressing the research questions. The pilot had a significant role in informing and developing the research study design.

Introduction

An increasing amount of attention has been drawn lately to English language teaching and assessment in Higher Education (HE) in Saudi Arabia. Concerns have been raised about Saudi students' language proficiency at tertiary level, as well as the need to understand the mechanisms of teaching, assessment and the type of support given to students (Alnassar & Dow, 2013). A shared partnership between individual teachers, department heads, college and institutional leaders and the national government itself through the Ministry of Education is one considerable proposition that has been brought to attention by the authors. In order to improve the instruction of the English language in the last decade, standards for quality assurance and accreditation of Saudi HE programmes such as the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) have been revised (Almoossa, 2017). International and national accreditation commissions have been targeting Preparatory Year Programmes (PYP) since their introduction in Saudi HE in 2004. Since that time, the goal of PYP was to provide students with the necessary skills for their tertiary studies. However, there is evidence that the outcomes of the PYP are below expectations, and that students are not reaching the intended writing assessment goals by the end of most English language courses (Alhosani, 2008; Al-Seghayer, 2017). Additionally, it has been observed that students have critical problems during their writing course (Almoossa, 2017). Al-Seghayer (2017) argues that in the majority of Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms teachers tend to focus primarily at a sentence level with an error free product that is enforced by the teacher. As a result, feedback tends to be lacking in terms of content, and learners' representation of their ideas tend to lack authenticity. This concern brings attention to English language instruction and teachers' feedback provision on learners' Second Language (L2) writing.

Review of Literature

1. Teacher Cognition: The Nature of Beliefs

Teacher cognition has been reviewed extensively by Borg (2003; 2006) who indicates that teachers have cognitions about all aspects of their work. It was understood that teachers have theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject matter that informs or is informed by their teaching. This notion of teacher cognition entails the process of how teachers acquire and transform knowledge, and then use it in the classroom, which is often referred to as beliefs. Defining an elusive concept such as beliefs can be quite challenging, yet many scholars have attempted to provide applicable descriptions. According to Borg (2006) beliefs generally refer to a proposition that is held consciously or subconsciously ; it guides an individual's views and actions and serves as a guide to thought and behaviour. From another perspective, Eisenhart et al (1988) define beliefs as an attitude that is regularly applied to an activity. This implies that our beliefs impact our thoughts and behaviour, and thus belief and attitude are interrelated. Pajares (1992, p. 319) explains that attitudes are: "clusters of beliefs around a particular object or situation form attitudes that become action agendas", suggesting that beliefs and attitudes are connected. This implies that beliefs are fundamental in forming and developing attitudes, and that the latter in turn guides one's behaviour. The different beliefs that individuals hold may vary in complexity, intensity, and according to their significance, observes Pajares.

It is important to discuss beliefs because they can affect teachers' ways of perceiving and interpreting knowledge, as they are thought to be influential on teachers' thinking and classroom practice (Pajares, 1992). Although beliefs and knowledge are frequently associated with one another, it was claimed by Woods (1996) that when enough knowledge was not available, teachers would rely on their beliefs as a guide, and that beliefs play a role in teachers' decisions, judgments and behaviour. Kagan (1992) argued that most of teachers' professional knowledge is regarded as beliefs. Furthermore, teachers' beliefs, knowledge, experiences and work conditions have been recognised as shaping their classroom practices (Borg, 2003). Consequently, having a better understanding of teachers' beliefs would contribute to improvements in teaching and learning (Chambers, 2018). Nevertheless, whether beliefs are conscious or subconscious, teachers might hold beliefs that are not reflected in their teaching. For example, a teacher might express positive beliefs about the value of peer feedback but fail to comply with this belief due to one or more factors.

2. Definition of Assessment Feedback

The function of assessment in education is identified as being either summative (i.e. aimed at measuring achievement) or formative (i.e. designed to provide students with feedback on progress and support their development) explains Brown (2004). The term 'assessment feedback' is used as a broader concept to include different types of feedback, with varied roles and functions. According to Evans (2013), this includes all feedback interactions that are created within assessment design, occurring within the immediate learning context, beyond, and collectively drawing

from a range of sources. Furthermore, Nelson and Schunn (2009) identified three comprehensive meanings of 'assessment feedback': (a) motivational: influencing beliefs and willingness to participate; (b) reinforcement: to reward or to punish specific behaviours; and (c) informational: to change performance in a particular direction.

3. Rationale for the Research

Feedback quality and timeliness are crucial in the process of students' English language learning in HE contexts, asserts Irons (2008). In order to support students' writing development, teachers' ability in providing feedback should be considered as an important part of the teaching practice (Parr & Timperley, 2010). However, there is a lack of work addressing feedback from the lecturer perspective (Evans, 2013). Also, little is known about assessment feedback in L2 writing, as opposed to students' and teachers' feedback preferences in Saudi HE contexts (Alkubaidi, 2014; Shukri, 2014; Jamoom, 2016; Hamouda, 2011; Grami, 2005; Rajab et al. 2016) and teachers' written feedback alone (Alkhatib, 2015). On a global scale, Black and McCormick (2010) argue that in HE contexts, there should be a greater focus on oral as opposed to written feedback, which emphasises the importance of incorporating dialogic features in the feedback process. Thus, greater explanation is needed of teachers' cognitions and practices of feedback provision, while managing congruence between both formative and summative writing assessment feedback practice. Kubanyiova and Feryok (2015) suggest that language teacher cognition research should embrace the complexity of teachers' inner lives within their educational context. Such assertion is based on the view that considers the diversity of teachers' distinctive learning and educational experiences, and the uniqueness of the contexts in which they work. This was an aspect worthy of consideration while conducting this pilot study, as the introduction of a new curriculum was a notable addition to the context. Thus, the central focus of this research is EFL teacher cognition and their feedback provision on students' writing assessments, with the introduction of the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum.

The Method

1. Aims of the Pilot

The purpose of the pilot was to explore teachers' cognition of assessment feedback through answering the main research question: *What cognitions do English language teachers hold about corrective feedback for their learners' L2 writing assessments?* Answering this question would provide an initial understanding of participants' conceptualization of feedback, based on their self-reported feedback provision for the writing assessments. The instrumental tool that was piloted, was individual semi-structured interviews with teacher participants. This research tool served in gaining an understanding of teachers' cognition of feedback, specifically their beliefs on feedback. According to Locke et al (2000) the results of exploratory studies are intended to be used in supporting precise procedures that are proposed in a research project. Therefore, testing the interview questions served in informing the validityof the data collection method. Finally, observing teachers' written feedback on their students' writing assessments served in further validation of participants'

previously reported practice.

2. The Educational Context: Introduction of EAP

A single case was identified for this pilot study: an English language institute at a Saudi university, which had implemented an EAP curriculum in its Preparatory Year Programme. Since the inception of the academic year in September 2018, the EAP course was introduced to Preparatory Year Students, to serve students in the Sciences, who would use English as the medium of learning in their future academic studies. The EAP course was chosen for this study since it was being considered for full implementation in the near future. As a significant application in this educational context, selecting this EAP course for piloting had also served in gaining impressions from EFL teachers about the newly adapted writing component of the course. Thus, it was possible to capture teachers' cognitive response to this curricular change, in terms of describing their feedback provision on learners' writing.

As for describing the English language programme, its courses are delivered using a system of modules, with four teaching modules per academic year. Each module consists of six teaching weeks, with 18-hours of instructions per week, and the final examination is scheduled during the seventh week of each module. Students must be assessed as having successfully completed and passed one level in order to proceed to the next level, and likewise throughout the entire programme (ELI 2017). Learners' language proficiency is based on the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR is an international standard for describing language ability on a six-point scale, ranging from A1 (beginners), up to C2 (those who have mastered a language). In terms of learning, teaching, and assessment, the (CEFR), is used as a guideline to describe the achievement of learners of foreign languages. It should be noted that upon students' admission to the university, they are required to take a placement test to ensure being accurately assigned in the appropriate level of the programme, and according to learners' proficiency levels. The purpose of the English language programme is to ensure that students achieve a proficiency equivalent to the CEFR of B1+ (independent/threshold users of L2) within one academic year, to secure college entry.

3. Recruitment of Teacher Participants

After having received ethical approval to carry out this pilot, recruitment of teacher participants was facilitated through an administrative manager at the English language institute in one Saudi university. Policy related issues in this governmental educational context had enforced gender segregation in its campuses, as male and female professionals had been allocated workspaces in separate campuses. Consequently, facilitation of teacher participants would be through separate administrative teams. It would have been considered interesting to include a mixed gender sample in this pilot, but time constraints during the piloting period had prevented such inclusion. The identified participants were six female English language teachers who had come from different national backgrounds including Egypt, India, UK, Sudan and Pakistan (see Table 1. The Participants). Information and consent forms had been received via email and returned after inserting e-signatures

from both sides. Samples of students' written work (with teacher feedback comments) were shared with the researcher as well. For practicality reasons, phone call interviews had substituted for face-to-face, and each interview had been previously arranged according to participant availability. The interviews were conducted in the English language, and each phone interview lasted 30 – 45 minutes. The semi-structured interview format was guided using separate sections and themes. Please see Interview Questions for Teachers in the Appendix.

Table 1: The Participants

Pseudonym	Nationality	Degree	Educational Specialization	EFL Teaching Experience	Learner Language Group	
Faiza	Egypt	Master's	TESOL and Technology	17 years	101	CEFR A1
Sana	India	2 Master's	Sociology - English Literature	16 years	102	CEFR A2
Suma	UK/Sudan	Master's	Teacher Education and Reflection	24 years	101	CEFR A1
Farah	Pakistan	2 Master's	English Language and Literature – English Language Teaching and Learning	12 years	102	CEFR A2
Lina	India	Master's	English Language and Literature	14 years	102	CEFR A2
Dr Lara	Egypt	PhD	English Literature (Poetry)	26 years	102	CEFR A2

Data Analysis of the Pilot

This section presents the analysis based on data that had been collected through interviews with the six participants. After the audio recordings had been transcribed, data was located under the themes that had guided the interview scheme (please see appendix). The main themes where qualifications and training; teachers' previous learning experience; the context and EFL learners; teachers' cognition (knowledge and beliefs about feedback); teachers' self-reported feedback provision, and feedback focus. Further themes had emerged over exploration of patterns and differences amongst the sample. Data information was entered into Excel to help in identifying each participant's profile, their qualifications, and self-reported use of feedback sources (e.g. teacher, peer, self) and approaches (e.g. blackboard, face-to-face). The following headings are based on the interview themes, including emerging themes found in the literature.

1. Participants' Qualifications, Training, and Previous L2 Learning Experiences

When it comes to research on language teacher cognition, pervious learning experiences of teachers is considered as a critical factor in terms of how it may influence their practice. Evidence shows that teachers' own experience as learners can inform cognitions about teaching and learning which continue to exert an influence on teachers throughout their career (Borg, 2003). Thus, it was essential to acquire an understanding of participants' previous learning experience, through inquiring about their educational background. The first two sections of the interview had sought out individual differences amongst EFL teachers in terms of their academic degrees, teacher training and EFL feedback experience. In terms of diversity and educational background, this sample could be considered a representation of the demographic population of teachers at the language institute, with the total population of 130 female teachers at that time. All six participants were bilingual, three of whom spoke English as their native language. They had been experienced EFL teachers within their current educational context, and their experience in EFL teaching had varied between 12 and 26 years across the sample. Their educational degrees had been subject specific within the domain of social sciences. Amongst the sample, there was one PhD holder, one PhD part-time student, and the rest had obtained Master's degrees. When asked about receiving feedback as learners, all participants mentioned that better feedback had been given in their tertiary level education, especially in terms of receiving detailed and structured feedback on content information. This was compared to feedback which had only focused on mechanics (e.g. spelling, punctuation, etc.) in their earlier education (i.e. school). Some reported receiving a mixture of positive and negative feedback from their supervisors in postgraduate studies. Others reported on receiving feedback during their teacher training, through peers and 1-1 coaching.

2. The Context and EFL Learners

Following individual differences amongst the participants, section three of the interview scheme had discussed the newly introduced course books, and learners' language proficiency. Since the pilot took place towards the end the module, this was advantageous for the research, as the participants had become familiar with the new curriculum, and with their students. The assessment plan for writing offers many opportunities for teachers to provide feedback, and across many forms of assessment. In less than 7 weeks, teachers reported that they had implemented numerous assessments in writing, both formative (during instruction) and summative (at the end of instruction). It was reported that the formative assessment on the writing component of the EAP course had included classroom-based writing tasks, allowing students to produce written drafts and receive feedback on their writing. Teachers noted that they were required to give feedback on classroom writing tasks and online forum posts on Blackboard (an online educational platform). Students were required to complete these tasks to progress in the course.. Four participants had been teaching CEFR A2 courses, and the remaining two had taught CEFR A1 courses (A1/A2 are basic English language credited courses). Though the participants had expressed their satisfaction with the new course books, when asked about their learners' ability in writing in the target language, they unanimously

noted that their learners had struggled to understand the rules in English writing, with regards to structure and form. Furthermore, it was noted by three participants that their learners' speaking ability in English had exceeded their writing ability in English.

3. Teachers' Cognition: Knowledge and Beliefs about Feedback

Section four of the interview sought teachers' cognition of feedback, through exploring teachers' conceptualisation, beliefs on feedback, and what they mainly knew about feedback. Borg (2006) explained that teachers have theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject matter that informs or is informed by their teaching. This notion of teacher cognition entails the process of how teachers acquire and transform knowledge, and eventually use it in the classroom. It was observed that teachers' conceptualization of feedback was a puzzling inquiry for the majority of participants. For example, when they were asked about their knowledge and understanding, the answers had not been as clear as one would expect. This could be due to the nature of the question, which required drawing on a definition of an abstract term. The majority of the participants asked for further clarification of what was requested, and then went into discussing the purpose of feedback, its' value, based on their experience in receiving and giving feedback. Only one participant was able to provide a descriptive definition of feedback, Lara, who said, "feedback is the reinforcement of knowledge… the removing of misconceptions and providing correct conceptions." In the literature, Keh (1990) describes feedback in writing as, 'a fundamental element' of a process approach which can also be defined as input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. Through feedback, the writer learns where they have confused the reader by not supplying enough information, illogical organization, lack of development of ideas, or inappropriate word-choice or tense. Lara's conceptualization of feedback, as a notion, resembles Keh's description in some way. Farah, however, said that feedback did not have an appealing meaning to her and preferred to use the word "counselling" instead, which she described as "…professional guidance". She had reported the use of classroom time to discuss with her learners their errors and how they should develop their writing. The remaining participants had discussed their conceptualization of feedback in terms of why it is important to them, but it was difficult to elicit from the majority, a well-defined statement of their conceptualisation of feedback.

When discussing teachers' beliefs about feedback, this proved to be less problematic for the participants to provide answers to questions such as, *"Why do you provide feedback for in-class writing? What is the purpose behind it?"* Such questions facilitated responses from teachers about beliefs on feedback. Regardless of their educational qualification, participants' responses revealed similar beliefs about feedback across the sample. While teachers had different feedback approaches, they were guided by their strong belief in the goodness that feedback serves. This resonated immensely with the literature, especially with the rising emphasis on dialogic feedback as discussed in numerous studies (Evans, 2013; Carless et al., 2011; Carless & Boud, 2018), and the importance of allowing clarification of teachers' written feedback through follow up with verbal commentaries.

Other benefits of feedback were mentioned by two participants which included supporting the learning process and preparing students for summative exams. Bearing in mind the context and culture, the participants had reported students' fixation on their need for practice prior to the exam. Since the courses were high stakes by nature, this could, however, be considered as a source of motivation for learners, as reported by 2 participants. They had emphasised how careful and attentive their learners were, and though they relied on their teachers as the main source of feedback, they were keen to understand their errors. It must be noted however, within any form of feedback, learners' cognitive interpretation ability and metacognitive awareness must be considered by teachers, in order for the feedback strategy to be effective (Kim, 2009, cited in Evans, 2013).

4. Teachers' Self-Reported Feedback Provision

The participants had provided narrative reports of their feedback provision, particularly within formative assessment. Writing tasks on Blackboard was another exploratory analysis in this study. Participants reported that students responded well to this task when they received e-feedback from their teachers. It was noted that this was a favourable task for their learners, due to their 'tech-savvy' nature in using technology for educational purposes. They reported that their learners were keen to complete all 6 discussion tasks, which they were in fact graded on. However, plagiarism cases were noted by two participants. A question of whether teachers' e-feedback was understood by learners, could not be determined through the pilot. One participant noted that her students would ask for an explanation of her e-feedback on Blackboard. Other participants mentioned that they needed to identify students' errors in the classroom, as a follow-up method for their feedback provision. Ensuring feedback that is timely may serve in the level of effectiveness as noted in the literature (e.g. Evans, 2013). Thus, it is important that learners receive immediate feedback on writing tasks, whether it is electronic feedback or face-to-face.

The literature on teacher cognition was used in analysing teachers' reported feedback practice. Participants in the study were requested to clarify their practice by answering to questions that included, *"why have you chosen such practice…(or) what was the purpose of applying such method?"* This had served in understanding teachers' beliefs and the value they gave for using different forms of feedback with their learners. Ghandeel (2016) supports the sense in which understanding the complex nature of beliefs can help in explaining the relationship between beliefs and practice, as some beliefs seem to be more influential on practices than others. Teachers' responses confirmed that their beliefs were indeed related to their pedagogy and practical knowledge. To support this argument, evidence from the literature (e.g. Kagan, 1992) says that most of teachers' professional knowledge is regarded as beliefs. Additionally, Woods (1996) argued that teachers' beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge develop through teacher experience, especially when they are faced with challenges. According to Borg (2006) this definition of beliefs entails an emotional obligation and serves as a guide to thought and behaviour. Therefore, it is important to discuss beliefs when considering teachers' practice, as

beliefs can affect their ways of perceiving and interpreting knowledge and are thought to be influential on teachers' thinking and classroom practice (Kagan 1992; Pajares 1992).

A significant observation this pilot study had identified, was that some teachers valued feedback more than others. This was based on the reported application of different feedback sources. The literature on teaching and assessment of writing reveals three major areas of feedback, according to Hyland & Hyland (2006): peer feedback (i.e. learner-learner); teacher-learner conferencing as feedback (i.e. group/individual verbal commentaries); and teachers' written comments as feedback evaluation and error correction. Teachers' self-reported feedback approaches had resonated with the literature in terms of feedback aims. For example, Hattie and Timperley (2007) discussed self-regulation (as a feedback aim), which is the ability to regulate one's behaviour and actions in order to achieve learning goals in the process of becoming autonomous (i.e. independent). Two participants had identified the role of feedback in developing learner autonomy, which is synonymous with self-regulation. Through using metacognitive elements such as monitoring, evaluating, and taking control of their learning, learners can self-regulate their learning. Another participant identified motivation, which resonated with Nelson and Schunn's (2009) description of 'assessment feedback'. Feedback could be motivational in terms of influencing beliefs and learners' willingness to participate. Sana, for example, believed that her feedback had motivated her learners to do their writing tasks. She also added that this practice had encouraged other learners to complete the writing tasks that they had ignored, which had served in reinforcement of the learning objectives.

Based on participants' description of their feedback provision, the classroom may have been a space for collaboration and engagement. For example, participants reported displaying samples of students' written work on the screen to discuss errors and provide feedback within a whole class discussion. This was reported as being useful in allowing interactive feedback, as learners are engaged in the process, permitting learners to make judgements about their own learning (Black et al., 2003). This unique process of internalization was described by Vygotsky and entails developmental processes in learning. Vygotsky did not limit mediation within the zone of proximal development to teachers but made peer mediation an important means for internalization (1978, cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006, pp. 24-25). This zone of proximal development, results in differences between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with the help that is provided. This was a noteworthy finding, which indicated the importance of considering peer feedback in the EFL classroom, and not specifically teacher-led feedback.

5. Teachers' Feedback Focus

The final section of the interview had discussed teachers' feedback focus with reference to the assessment rubric, and how it had influenced their feedback provision in the classroom. All three forms of writing assessment were explored, to identify how teachers' feedback had emerged. Participants were asked about giving feedback on students' writing tasks on Blackboard, course book writing tasks, and

the writing exam. On a weekly basis, writing tasks in the course included the course book writing tasks and Blackboard writing tasks, on which learners were formatively assessed by their teachers. There were two writing exams included in the course, one taking place mid-way through the course, and the other at the very end. The first writing exam allowed time for classroom feedback as a follow-up method following teachers' written commentaries. According to the participants, this gave students the opportunity to develop their writing following the feedback. When it came to preparing learners for their writing test, learners' understanding of the writing test prompt was a concern. This was considered essential for the participating teachers, as they noted that their learners did not understand what they had been asked to write, since the instructions were in the target language. When it was time to take their first writing exam during the course, one participant described that experience by saying, "I watched my students as they took their exam and they knew exactly what to do, because they had been thoroughly trained for this". Another participant noted, I just told them one thing before they began writing, "Read the question carefully... and they did."

The research question related to the rubric, *what is the focus of EFL instructors' feedback on students' academic writing?* had sought to identify teachers' feedback in terms of rubric focus. Although the rubric is associated with error correction feedback, it was mentioned by Suma as being a guide in helping teachers identify students' errors. The majority of participants reported positive comments about the rubric, on being detailed and covering both form and content, with the written feedback on the exam as an indication of major error(s). Institutional documents in relation to the writing assessments grading rubrics were observed, for the purpose of validating teachers' reported information. In providing feedback on students' writing exams, teachers had been instructed to provide written comment on students' global errors. In support of their statements, participants had been requested to deliver samples of their students' writing tasks with written feedback provided (including both formative e-texts and summative paper-based texts). It was observed that there was no particular focus on specific rubric items, as both form and content were mentioned in teachers' written feedback. Examining samples of students' writing exams with teachers' written comments, signified that the feedback was concise and served in informing each students' achievement. Unlike summative assessment, formative assessment might have allowed the teachers to believe that their feedback was effective, while being both classroom-based and timely. Written feedback on learners' exam was not necessarily supportive of how learners would develop their writing, as reported by the participants. When followed by dialogic (i.e. conversational) feedback, however, such method could be more supportive of their learning (Evans, 2013). Only one of the six participants had reported this practice of dialogic feedback following written feedback on students' exams. The remaining participants said that they had provided written feedback only.

6. Pilot Data Summary

Although this study had initially begun by looking into teacher-led feedback, it was discovered that teachers had conceptualised feedback to be effective when it had

been conveyed in class. Participants had reported their use of peer, group, and individual feedback, modelling of exemplars, use of First Language (L1), and integration of electronic and dialogic feedback. While the majority reported the importance of teacher feedback, others highlighted collaborative feedback through enhancing student involvement. Faiza for example, expressed the benefit of peer feedback on her learners. She thought it was effective due to it being carried out in an informal manner amongst the learners, and for being less intimidating when it came from their friends. Faiza added, "They happily accepted criticism from each other", which agrees with Topping (2010) who found that non-directive peer feedback was more effective due to greater psychological safety. Therefore, it was noted that teachers' conceptualization of feedback may include the varied roles, types, meanings, and functions of feedback along with the conceptual frameworks underpinning feedback principles. Figure 1. Teacher's Conceptualization of Assessment Feedback builds on Nelson and Schunn's (2009) comprehensive meanings of 'assessment feedback'. Based on the analysis, learner associated terms such as *engagement, self-regulation*, developing *learner-autonomy* have been used to build this model. This also supports Evans (2013) description of assessment feedback which includes all feedback exchanges that are produced within assessment design, occurring within and beyond the learning context, and drawing from different sources.

Figure 1. Teachers' Conceptualization of Assessment Feedback
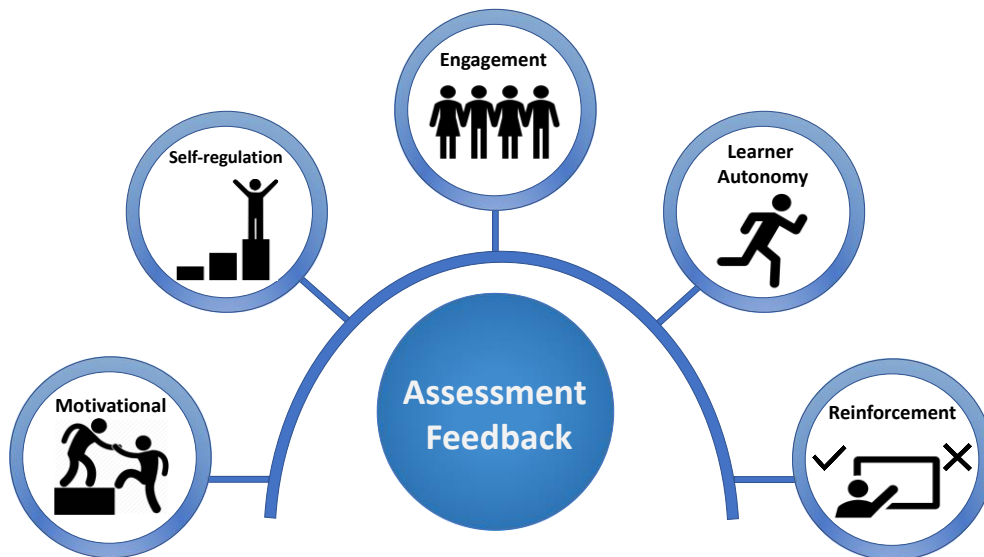
Conclusion

This pilot study has been carried out to analyse the appropriateness of the interview questions in order to seek information on the context this study aims to explore. Through reflection upon the pilot and the literature, it is worthy to further explore assessment feedback in this Saudi EAP context. The pilot study sought to explore both formative and summative feedback on learners' L2 writing through testing the

interview questions. It has served in forming an understanding of how teachers value their feedback provision. The semi-structured interview approach served in gaining an understanding of teachers' feedback provision, while allowing space for flexibility between each set of questions and amongst the sample. Testing the interview questions had served in informing the validity of the research tool in terms of adequately addressing the research questions, while keeping in mind the importance of wording in questions that inquire about abstract terms. Further considerations had surfaced, such as suggestions for conducting classroom observations in order to analyse teachers' behaviour within context. Thus, exploring other dimensions of teachers' beliefs with regards to assessment feedback could be complemented with additional methods. Based on the responses that the participants had reported, their feedback provision was believed to be active, engaging, formative, supportive of learning, and encouraging of learners' self-regulation. Thus, it is worthy to consider a richer exploration of teachers' feedback provision through the employment of classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews, as sequential methods in the research design. This could allow witnessing assessment feedback in the classroom, in order to gain a better understanding of language teacher cognition. Indeed, the pilot has served in informing the overall design of the main study, as additional research tools have been proposed for exploring further aspects of feedback on learners' writing.

References

Alhosani, N. 2008. *Utilizing the writing process approach with English as a second language writers: A case study of five fifth grade ESL Arab students.* Doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University.

Alkhatib, N. 2015. *Written corrective feedback at a Saudi university: English language teachers' beliefs, students' preferences, and teachers' practices.* Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Essex.

Alkubaidi, M. 2014. The Relationship between Saudi English Major University Students' Writing Performance and Their Learning Style and Strategy Use. *English Language Teaching.* **7**(4), pp.83-95.

Almoossa, S. 2017. *Developing pedagogy and assessment in EFL: a case study of a Saudi university*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, King's College London.

Alnassar, S.A., and Dow, K.L., 2013. Delivering high-quality teaching and learning for university students in Saudi Arabia. *Springer, Dordrecht*. pp. 49-60.

Al-Seghayer, K. 2017. *Reality and challenges of TEFL writing in the 21st-century Saudi Arabia*. Riyadh: Hala Print Co.

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., and Wiliam, D. 2003. *Assessment for learning: putting it into practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Black, P., and McCormick, R. 2010. Reflections and new directions. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. **35**. pp. 493–499.

Borg, S. 2003. Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what

language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*. **36**(2), pp. 81-109.

Borg, S. 2006. *Teacher cognition and language education*. London: Continuum.

Brown, H. Douglas. 2004. *Language assessment: principles and classroom practices*. pp. 251-281, New York: Longman.

Carless, D. and Boud, D. 2018. The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, **43**(8), pp. 1315-1325

Carless, D., Salter, D., Yang, M., and Lam, J. 2011. Developing sustainable feedback practices. *Studies in Higher Education*. **36**, pp. 395–407.

Chambers, G. 2018. The Teachers' voice in Saxony-Anhalt: perspectives on transition from primary to secondary school. The Language Learning Journal. **46**(2), pp. 186-200.

Eisenhart, M., Shrum, J., Harding, J., and Cuthbert, A. 1988. Teacher beliefs: definitions, findings and directions. Educational Policy, **2**, pp. 51-70.

ELI 2017. *ELI Faculty Handbook* [Online]. Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University English Language Institute. [Accessed 15 March 2019]. Available from: http://eli.kau.edu.sa/Pages-en-teachers-res.aspx

Evans, C. 2013. Making sense of assessment feedback in higher education. *Review of educational research*. **83**(1), pp.70-120.

Gandeel, A. 2016, *English language teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the teaching of speaking*. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds.

Grami, M. 2005. The effect of teachers' written feedback on ESL students' perception: a study in a Saudi ESL university-level context. Annual Review of Education, Communication and Language Sciences. **2**, pp.18-41.

Hamouda, A. 2011. A study of students and teachers' preferences and attitudes towards correction of classroom written errors in Saudi EFL context. *English Language Teaching*. **4**(3), p. 128.

Hattie, J., and Timperley, H. 2007. The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, **77**, pp. 81–112.

Hyland, K., and Hyland, F. 2006. *Feedback in second language writing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Irons, A. 2008. Enhancing learning through formative assessment and feedback. London: Routledge.

Jamoom, O. 2016. *Teachers' beliefs and practices of feedback and preferences of students for feedback in university level EFL writing classrooms.* Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Southampton.

Kagan, D. M. 1992. Implication of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist,* **27**(1), pp.65-90.

Keh, C. 1990. Feedback in the writing process: A model and methods for implementation. *ELT Journal*. **44**(4), pp. 294–304.

Kubanyiova, M. and Feryok, A. 2015. Language teacher cognition in applied linguistics research: Revisiting the territory, redrawing the boundaries, reclaiming the relevance. *The Modern Language Journal*. **99**(3), pp.435-449.

Locke, L. Spirduso, W. and Silverman, S. 2000. *Proposals that work*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

NCAAA. 2011. *Handbook for quality assurance and accreditation in Saudi Arabia NCAAA*. [Accessed 26 March 2019]. Available from: https://www.mu.edu.sa/sites/default/files/content/2017/01/MU%2002_0.pdf.

Nelson, M. M., and Schunn, C. D. 2009. The nature of feedback: How different types of peer feedback affect writing performance. *Instructional Science*, **37**, pp. 375–401

Pajares, M. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, **62**(3), pp. 307-332.

Parr, J. and Timperley, H. 2010. Feedback to writing, assessment for teaching and learning and student progress. *Assessing writing*. **15**(2), pp.68-85.

Rajab, H., Khan, K. and Elyas, T. 2016. A Case Study of EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices in Written Corrective Feedback. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, **5**(1). pp. 119-131.

Shukri, N.A., 2014. Second Language Writing and Culture: Issues and Challenges from the Saudi Learners' Perspective. *Arab World English Journal.* **5**(3).

Topping, K. J. 2010. Methodological quandaries in studying process and outcomes in peer assessment. *Learning and Instruction*, **20**, pp.339–343.

Tsui, A. 1996. Reticence and anxiety in second language learning. In K.M. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom: Qualitative research in second language education*. pp. 145-167. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Woods, D. 1996. *Teacher cognition in language teaching: beliefs, decision-making and class-room practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Author: Ruaa Hariri is a PhD candidate at the University of Leeds (UoL), researching English language teachers' cognitions and practices of feedback provision at a Saudi University. She is also the representative for Post Graduate Researchers in the School of Education, and one of the organizers for the Education and Policy Discussion Group. She is a Lecturer at King Abdulaziz University, where she began her teaching career as an English language teacher in 2008.

Email: edrh@leeds.ac.uk

Appendix: Interview Questions for Teachers

Section 1: Teachers' Profiles – Qualifications and Training
1. What is your educational qualification(s)? In which major(s)?
2. Do you have any TESOL or ASSESSMENT related certificates, diplomas or a teacher license?
3. How many years have you been teaching English?

Section 2: Teachers' Previous Learning Experience
4. What is your native language?
5. Tell me about your experience in learning writing:
   o As a student in school, how was it?
   o As a student in university, how was it?

Section 3: The Context and EFL Learners
6. Which course level are you teaching?
7. Could you describe your learners' writing ability with-in the following?
   o in-class writing tasks
   o Blackboard
   o Writing exam
8. What do your students need to learn to improve their writing skills?

Section 4: Teachers' Cognition: Knowledge and Beliefs about Teacher Feedback
9. Could you describe the concept of teacher feedback?
10. What is your understanding of teacher feedback?
11. What is your experience in giving feedback? What do you think works and what doesn't?
12. Why do you provide feedback for in-class writing?
13. Why do you provide feedback on Blackboard?
14. Why do you provide feedback on the writing exam?
15. Does your feedback describe to your learners what they need to do to move forward?
16. Does feedback help in achieving the learning objectives?
17. What is the role of feedback? What do you think it serves?
    (Does it support learning, judgment of students' work, etc.?)
18. What do you think your students do with feedback?

Section 5: Teachers' Practice: Feedback Focus
19. In terms of the rubric items, which have received your attention while you provide feedback in the classroom? and why?
20. What other forms of feedback do you use? and why?
21. Could you show me a sample of your feedback on the following:
    • students' in-class written work
    • students' responses on Blackboard

Section 6: Concluding Remarks
22. Do you have any other comments, suggestions, concerns about teacher feedback in L2 writing?

_____

Researching an overseas topic at the University of Leeds

Abraham Gerardo Gutierrez Ezquerra, University of Leeds

ABSTRACT: This article aims to provide guidance and motivation to international students in the UK who want to research a problem from their home countries. Lecturers and dissertation supervisors could also be interested in the analysis and recommendations made. The document presents the experiences of an international student at the University of Leeds during the dissertation process. The research project was a qualitative multiple case study that examined the relationship between educational effectiveness and the styles of management and leadership in three public teacher training colleges (TTC) in Mexico via online interviews. In a narrative style, the experiences are described from the perspective of the student, analysing the difficulties faced when studying a problem that is not located in the UK, and the actions taken to solve this. Four main difficulties are addressed: the problem of deciding on a research focus when in a country different to that which you wish to study, complications when constructing a literature review, the many inconveniences of data collection when conducting online interviews, and translation issues during the analysis of the data. To conclude, some proposals are presented that could be implemented at an institutional level to solve these problems.

Designing an international research project at the University of Leeds

Studying for a Master's degree at the University of Leeds can be a rich but demanding academic experience for any international student. All of us go through a process of adaptation, facing cultural and academic differences. Before I arrived in Leeds, I did not consider such differences to be a cause for concern. However, I encountered a wide multicultural community in my International Education Leadership and Policy MA sessions, with classmates from different corners of the world (e.g. Uzbekistan, China, United States, Malaysia, England, Sri Lanka, South Korea and myself from Mexico) and with very contrasting perspectives about education. When listening to my professors and classmates with varying cultural, economic, political, and social backgrounds, I realised that it was going to be a challenging environment in which to develop a research project that could be focused on my own specific context. I questioned myself: is it convenient to study a Mexican theme in the UK? Am I going to struggle to communicate my ideas and intentions to my dissertation supervisor? Is he going be able to provide guidance on my Mexican research topic? Am I going to have all the resources to collect data on the other side of the world?

Despite all the doubts I had about studying the Mexican educational context from the UK, I decided to take the challenge and to face all the difficulties implied when studying something that is situated 8,942 km away and in a different language to English (e.g. not finding enough information, translation issues, and difficulties with collection of data). For my dissertation, I designed a qualitative multiple case study to examine the relationship between educational effectiveness and the styles of management and leadership in three public teacher training colleges (TTCs) in

Mexico. To implement the research process of my dissertation, I followed a framework similar to the one provided by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012, p.29), who propose different stages (choose the research problem, review the literature, design the methodology). This document describes the complications encountered during some of these stages. For example, I first examine the construction of the research problem, then the creation of the literature review, some troubles with the data collection are addressed, and I finally conclude with the analysis and interpretation of data phase.

Construction of the research problem

As students, we look for something significant and relevant for our professional aspirations, this is why choosing a topic for the dissertation can be a troublesome and confusing stage. The module leaders encourage you to opt for an issue from your own context. All students, however, must consider the supervision and data collection difficulties before making a decision. I met many students that preferred a topic that is less strongly related to their interests but that is situated in the UK so that it can be more easily studied. For example, some Chinese students from the School of Education commented that they wanted to study issues on the topic of teaching English in China. Unfortunately, the complication of not being able to travel back and forth to their home countries, made them shift their focus to the study of local British primary schools. I even met a student from Latin America whose supervisor convinced her to move her research context to the UK, because her supervisor felt she did not have the knowledge to guide the student on the topic that she proposed. I think that the University of Leeds academic staff should be more encouraging and supportive when an international student is proposing the study of a topic from their own country. It was less difficult for me because I come from a very specific field (TTCs in Mexico), and I had a very particular question in mind (how are the management models and leadership styles influencing the administrative and academic effectiveness of teaching colleges in Mexico?). However, even with this precise topic selection, I struggled for weeks to define the research problem. This why I advise other students to start thinking about this from the beginning of their Masters course.

Composition of the literature review

The literature reviewed for my dissertation was focused on management and leadership in educational institutions. My supervisor provided me with excellent guidance on the theories about this topic and gave me a long reading list to analyse the theme. However, as postgraduate students, we are expected to make an extensive and exhaustive effort to research and source all the literature on the subject of our project. This was particularly difficult with leadership and management research on TTCs in Mexico. I knew that I could not be too reliant on my supervisor who, being from a different continent, was not going to be an expert on a matter that is not related to his cultural context or academic specialisation. In the beginning, this situation made me feel that I was not getting the right support

from the university. However, this is simply part of the many complications of studying an overseas topic.

After weeks of being completely lost searching through different online sources and Mexican data bases for the appropriate publications and papers, I thought of a better research strategy and looked for help in my own country. For this reason, I contacted a colleague from a TTC in Mexico who has extensive research experience. My contact provided me with the guidance I needed to find the appropriate documents, authors and books to support the study. In addition, she suggested I refine the problem of my dissertation in order to accurately address the real issues that TTCs are experiencing in Mexico.

The literature review is an essential element in developing an understanding of the problem and devising the appropriate data collection methods (e.g. questionnaires and interviews). Therefore, I would advise any international student researching an overseas topic to contact an expert from their own country at the beginning of the project. I want to clarify that I am not suggesting that my supervisor was not sufficiently capable or that he neglected his work, on the contrary he was very supportive and experienced. In this case however, extra support from an outside source was very helpful.

After overcoming the obstacle of finding the appropriate amount of information from a country where you are not physically present, the next barrier is the language. It was evident that if I was going to use papers and publications from Mexico, they were not going to be in English and I would therefore have to translate them from Spanish to English. This may sound an easy task that can be solved using Google Translator, but it is much more complex than that. Online translators frequently misinterpret words or phrases that can change the whole meaning of the author's intentions. An additional complication for publications in foreign languages is that 'studies that are unavailable in English are often excluded from systematic reviews and meta-analyses due to language restrictions' (Regmi, 2010, p.17). This implies that a student could copy another author's work word for word, but in translating it, could avoid penalisation for plagiarism. Upon seeing a fellow student doing this, I queried the ethical implications or sanctions that he may receive. He replied that it was common practice and that no one notices. Therefore, this common practice of plagiarism carried out by international students is an issue that should be considered by the academic staff of the University of Leeds.

Complications with the data collection

As previously mentioned, I designed a qualitative multiple case to study three TTCs in Mexico. The main difficulty with this selection is that the cases were located outside of the UK and scattered across various states of the Mexican territory, a situation that made it impossible to collect in-depth data from different sources, such as observation and face-to-face interviews (techniques that are usually recommended by authors such as Creswell and Pot, 2016 who specialise in research methods). As a result of my geographical restrictions, online interviews

recommended by Bryman (2012, p.477) for interviews conducted at a distance, were the only method of data collection formally used. Despite not being able to have conversational face-to-face interaction with my interviewees, online interviewing allowed me to have 'a full range of visual and verbal exchange… that closely resembles the natural back-and-forth of face-to-face communication, including verbal and nonverbal signals' (Salmons, 2015, p.2). For Kvale and Brinkmann (2015, p.51) the process of interviewing provides precise descriptions of what people have experienced, meaning that even if I was not physically present, the interviewees were able to describe the institutional panorama. Therefore, with the aforementioned online interviews, my study was able to describe the effects that the management and leadership styles had on the effectiveness of the organisation in every institution selected.

Using a purposeful sampling, suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018, p.270) as the best option for a qualitative case study, I selected five respondents from each institution, the objective being to obtain the opinions of leaders (e.g. heads of department, director of campus) and teaching staff (e.g. lecturers and professors). In order to communicate with these hard-to-reach participants, the data was collected using online videoconferencing platforms (Skype, Facebook, WhatsApp). Some authors like Lo Iacono et al (2016) express the benefits of this method by saying that it simplifies the process, with the advantage of saving conversations automatically on the computer. Online data collection however, presented some difficulties such as: technical skills (the researcher and the participants had to possess skills to use the platforms), internet connection (at some point the signal was weak and interrupted the conversations), and a time zone difference of seven hours. (I had to reschedule the interviews a couple of times because of these time differences and most of the interviews had to be carried out late evening UK time). The main complication, however, was that only 12 of the 15 participants expected were successfully interviewed, because even if the participants are selected and scheduled, they were not always available online. Simple advice I could offer to those students implementing online interviews, would be to look for the participants well in advance and establish a closer relationship with the interviewee, helping them to use the internet platforms, and answering any doubts. Furthermore, it would be helpful to schedule interviews at the weekend, so the respondent will have more flexibility on the times they are available or will be more open to being interviewed later at night. In addition, be aware that when you use a phone or computer to communicate with someone on the other side of the world, flaws in the sound and video quality are likely.

Analysis and interpretation of the data

Having completed the data collection, the next step is to organise and analyse the data. For this task I followed a postpositivist interpretative framework, that according to Creswell and Poth (2018, p.66) is when a qualitative researcher believes the interviewees have multiple perspectives. For the analysis of these perspectives, I used the assistance of a computer program (Nvivo 12). The first step of the analysis was to transcribe the interviews (from audio to text). As the interviews were carried

out in Spanish, the transcription was made without assistance of any voice recognition software. Students must be aware that not all languages work properly on this type of software and sometimes it is more frustrating than helpful to use them. The second step was to code the interviews using a grounded theory approach described by Lacey and Luff (2001, p.5), which was done on paper. Before this step I had to decide if I was going to do the coding process in Spanish or in English; each one has its own complications. On the one hand, coding in Spanish (or any language), ultimately requires you to reconstruct the entire process again in English for its interpretation. On the other hand, coding in English requires you to translate all the text from the interview transcriptions. I opted for coding in Spanish, because qualitative studies produce huge amounts of information, therefore, huge amounts of time would be required to translate all the information of 12 interviews. This way, I just had to translate select pieces of data. An additional consideration for the translation of the interviews is that the meaning given to certain concepts and ideas by the interviewee can vary greatly from one language to another, and from one code to another. Therefore, I had to ensure that the ideas from the participants of the study were not changed or lost in translation. I would suggest to any international student that is in this translation and analysis process, to look for help from an expert in your language and in English. I personally found a student from the University of Leeds who was studying Spanish in the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies and who is an English native speaker. She provided me with guidance and advice for the translations.

Recommendations for the academic community of the University of Leeds

I have addressed four main difficulties for an international student researching an overseas topic that in my experience of are the most significant: 1. Problems when deciding on an overseas research issue: 2. Barriers when constructing the literature review: 3. Complications of data collection: and 4. Translation issues during the analysis of the data. So, what improvements can be made by the University of Leeds for its 8,000 international students? Some recommendations that I could make from my own experience are:

- Supervisors should examine more closely the motivations behind the research aspirations of the students. For example, they could pose simple questions like: why would you want to study a topic from the UK and not from your own country? Is it because it is easier or because it is better? What is more, will this topic help you in your professional development?
- Knowing the University has connections with other institutions around the world, why not take advantage of this asset and develop a network for academic support? Professors in different countries could guide and mentor in those topics where it is needed.
- For the University, it would be beneficial to create internal networking spaces between faculties (e.g. the department of Languages Cultures and Societies could provide assistance to students that need to translate documents and empirical data).

Most of us as international students come to the UK with professional aspirations to take back to our countries; ideas that need to be developed to their full potential and projects to build a better future for our communities. I therefore encourage others in the same position as me to not give up on these goals, to not be afraid to face these barriers and to create new content that will be relevant and significant. Students need to be prepared to face these kinds of difficulties or at least know how to deal with these issues. Workshops in the library are a good tool to help and support international students in this situation.

References

Bloomberg L. and Volpe M. 2012. Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Roadmap from Beginning to End. SAGE. Thousand Oaks.

Creswell J. and Pot C. 2016. Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design. Fourth Edition. SAGE. London.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. 2015. Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing. 3rd Edition. London. Sage.

Lacey, A. and Luff, D. 2001. Qualitative Data Analysis. [Online] [Accessed 15 August 2019]. Available from: https://www.rds-yh.nihr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/9_Qualitative_Data_Analysis_Revision_2009.pdf

Lo Iacono, V. Symonds P. and Brown D. 2016. Skype as a Tool for Qualitative Research Interviews. [Online] [Accessed 15 January 2019]. Available from: http://www.socresonline.org.uk/21/2/12.html

Regmi K. 2010. Understanding the Processes of Translation and Transliteration in Qualitative Research. 9 (1) 16-26 [Online] [Accessed 22 March 2018]. Available from: https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/view/6829/6473

Salmons, J. 2015. Designing and conducting research with online interviews. Cases in online interview research. [Online] [Accessed 18 December 2018]. Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781506335155.n1

Author: Abraham Gutierrez: I graduated in 2009 with a BA in Business Management and later obtained a Masters degree in Education in 2013. Since 2012 I have been working as a professor in a teaching college in Mexico. Currently I am studying a Masters in International Education Leadership and Policy at the University of Leeds.

E-mail: abraham.gge@gmail.com

Reviewing the Quality of Master's Dissertations

Narantuya Jugder, National Academy of Governance, Mongolia

ABSTRACT: This article reviews the quality of research done at the master's level at the National Academy of Governance, Mongolia. It explains the concepts of theories regarding the evaluation of research, and analyses master's dissertations with the 16 criteria in seven categories. The overall analytical framework was based on the general criteria of credibility to define the quality of research, which was presented by Mårtensson et.al. (2016:597), as well as the questions to establish criteria that were used by Coughlan, Cronin, Ryan (2007:658) and CASP. The research result introduces subjects that research quality should focus upon to make better content, first and foremost being the internal accuracy of the research.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years research in the field of social science in Mongolian universities has tremendously increased and in a time when research work at the master's and doctor's level (graduate level) is giving emphasis on research methodology, issues concerning research quality are of importance. In fact, introducing Research Methodology in Social Sciences to master's and doctoral level students is a new and a very recent phenomenon in Mongolian universities. More specifically, teaching the research methodology was initiated at the National Academy of Governance (NAoG), just in 2008 and it has been ordered as a compulsory course for a post-graduate study in 2013 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports of Mongolia. Historically, our Academy has been an exemplary change agent for higher education in Mongolia in introducing new ideas to the country since the 1990s democratic social change. It was the institution that first introduced courses and programmes in the market economy, marketing, organisational changes and public administration in Mongolia. In terms of research methodology in social science, we were the initiators in Mongolia for introducing this subject as compulsory to master's and doctoral level studies as there was not any research methodology chapters in the submitted doctoral dissertations until 2018 and master's theses until 2014, and both lecturers and students struggle to write a research paper suited for international research journals.

But there are no studies so far on what is the quality level of graduate research practice since the introduction of research methodology a decade ago. The concern is if the research is conducted using the 'special' methodology similar to the segregated language that the scientific communism, a study of building communism scientifically, of the previous society used, it will be difficult for the research paper to be approved, and hard to communicate globally. Through this study, the researcher aims to address not only Mongolian public and academic community but also the international academic community for practical purpose. The reason is that if the guidelines and principles of the research methodology that is used by the scientific community worldwide is followed, it is more likely that the results of the research will be accurate and valid, and if not, there is a risk of spreading misinformation to

any society due to the misuse of methodology. Thus, **in order to find out what is the quality level of research work of graduating master's students is at**, the evaluation of some of the works has been addressed here. In order to achieve this goal, the theories and methods of scientists and researchers regarding the nature of the research was studied, and its overall conceptual framework was based on the general criteria of credibility to define the quality of research, which was presented by Mårtensson et al., as well as the questions to establish criteria that were used by Coughlan et al. and CASP. Within the framework of the selected criteria, the review or the evaluation of the research practice of master's students at the NAoG is presented. In the spring of the 2017-2018 academic year, of the 49 students who completed master's public administration and public management programme, 13 dissertations were evaluated.

THE NATURE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH QUALITY

It is important to note that research that has not followed the scientifically accepted methods, ethics, rules, and principles does not have the moral right to give society or individual persons true, accurate knowledge and facts, and scientific institutions regulate these issues with their own rules and procedures. This is a universal experience and we have no reason to not comply. As such many scientists, researchers, and scientific institutions use the above principles to answer the question of what research and science is, and to give definitions. Namely, Neuman (1997:2) says, "Research is a collection of methods which people use systematically to produce knowledge" and thus emphasizes that research is done in accepted and set ways. Rehearsing this idea, Baatartogtokh (2012:16) states that "Scientific research is an inquiry that is ruled by scientific methods" and emphasizes that research is conducted in methods that have a scientific basis. On the other hand, Mårtensson et al. give a more detailed definition of the two concepts of science and research. Specifically, they give the different definition:

> "Science contains a broader matter whereas research is the practical work of adhering to scientific principles. The result of a research practice is science"(Mårtensson, P., Fors, U., Wallin., S., Zander, U., Nilsson, G, 2016:594).

Researchers and research institutions have especially focused on a universal method of evaluating research quality and have developed guidelines and principles. When defining this concept, while Mertsens (Mertsens, 2015) says that evaluating research is to use a wide range of methods and measurements, Mårtensson et al. define it as "The practice of evaluation can be defined as an activity in which certain aspects of the quality of research practice are investigated" (2016:594). Some countries have created national guidelines in order to evaluate the quality of scientific research work. These usually highlight concepts such as the impact on and benefits towards science, technology, society, and economy, and the use of research results in society, whereas it is common for universities to create their own measurements. For instance, Mårtensson et al. (2016:594) write that each research institution in Sweden has its own guidelines on evaluating research quality.

There are models and standards for evaluating research quality, creating a standard,

and an answer to the question of what good research is. For example, the previously mentioned Swedish scientists Mårtensson, Fors, Wallen and others (2016, p. 596) developed a general model for evaluating research quality that is suited to many fields. According to them, when conducting research to create new knowledge, the ***research question*** decides the design and methods that will be used to carry out the research, and the research quality depends on how rigorously the researchers followed research methods and steps. The theories used in the research can be seen as 'maps' and research methods as 'nets'. Thus, according to their definition, and as shown in Figure-1, "the lower part of the research stems from the research question, and the upper part contains the goal of creating new knowledge" and if a work does not have a research question or a goal to create new knowledge, it is not a research work. This definition is unique in that it combines the definitions of many researchers and scientists.

Figure 1. What is research?
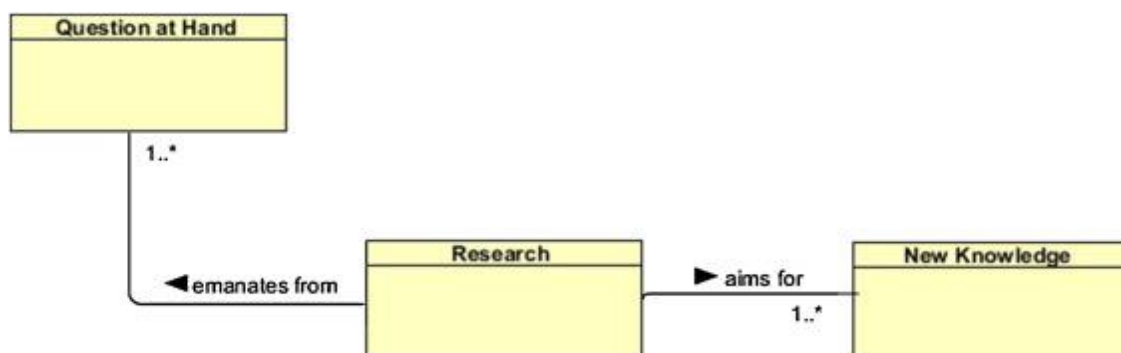
Source: ***Mårtensson et al. 2016:597***

In order to determine if research is conducted with quality, it is considered important to analyse if it has credibility and integrity (Coughlan, et al. 2007; Mårtensson, et al. 2016; Vance, et al. 2013). Now the question of what requirements need to be followed in order to ensure that these two criteria are met arises. This will be discussed in the following section.

## THE CONCEPT OF MEASURING THE RESEARCH QUALITY

Researchers emphasize that if research is conducted with credibility and integrity, its quality is safely met. According to Coughlan, Cronin, and Ryan (2007:658) in order to evaluate whether these two requirements are safely met when conducting quantitative research, the critic must ask questions regarding the research work and identify what steps were taken during the research process. That is, questions to establish credibility lean towards how much the research has been conducted in a credible manner. However, evaluating whether or not the research has integrity depends on determining if during the research process its procedures were followed rigorously. As such, it is seen that determining a research study's trustworthiness and practicality is helpful in establishing its integrity. The previously mentioned Mårtensson and others developed a general multidisciplinary approach for assessing research practice and quality. This model established 32 common concepts that are used in the research process, shows their interdependence and out of these

concepts, differentiates four main ones that relate to many academic research fields and ordered them in succession. They believe that these concepts can be used to determine the quality of research. These researchers proposed a detailed definition of research, basing it upon their own model. They thus emphasized

> "Research is a Conscious Action that aims for New Knowledge, emanates from one or several Questions at Hand, studies one or several Contexts, builds upon Existing Knowledge, uses one or several Scientific Methods, is documented in one Described Procedure, requires Transparency and relates to one or several Systems of Rules" (Mårtensson, et al. 2016:597).

Following this model, four main criteria were developed: 'Credible', 'Contributory', 'Communicable', and 'Conforming'. These models are shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Research quality model
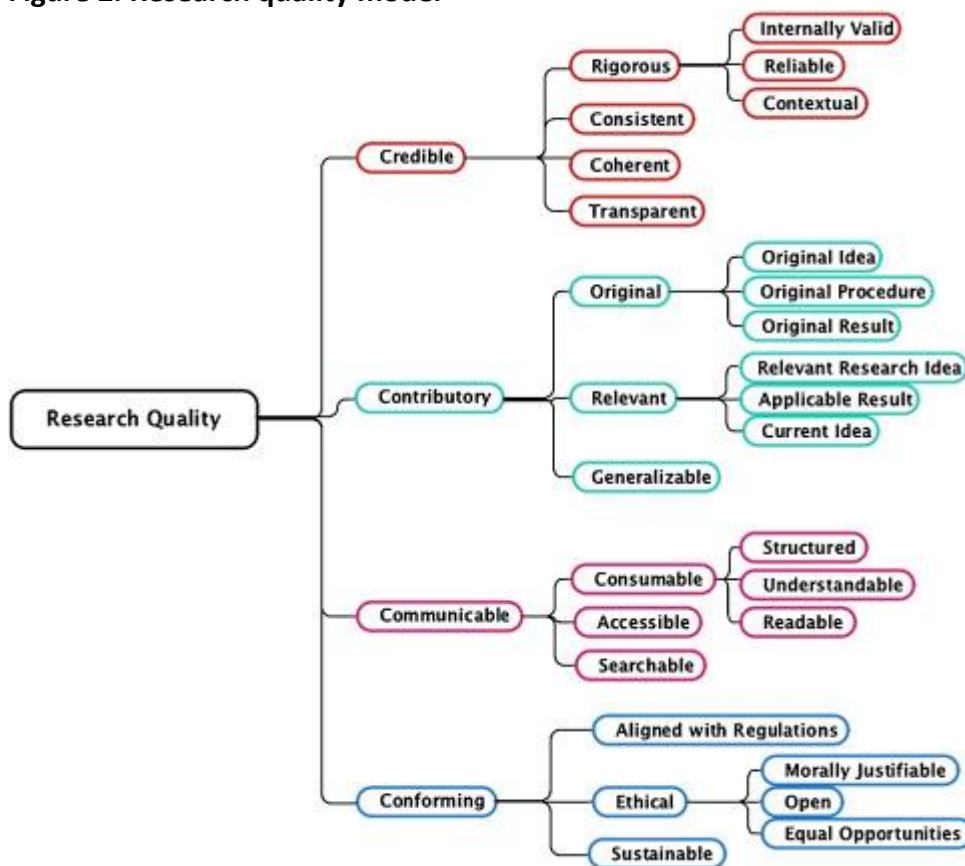
Source: quality model by (Mårtensson, P., Fors, U., Wallin., S., Zander, U., Nilsson, G, 2016, p. 598)

The figure above shows the concepts that belong to the four main criteria. Specifically, at the top of the model, there are seven concepts that belong to 'Credible'. To be credible is to be coherent, consistent, rigorous and transparent. In order for research to be 'Contributory', the research question raised has to be original, and the new knowledge being researched must contain practical benefits for both theory and application. 'Communicable' research has a correct structure, is understandable, unchallenging to read, and explains the research process and new knowledge according to the procedure and with supporting evidence. 'Conforming' research is research that meets and rigorously follows ethical and legal principles.

However, for evaluating the research practice of master's students, we are not aiming to comprehensively explain these four main criteria, but will only focus on and explain the criteria 'Credible'. This is due to the fact that in the master's work we will be analysing, it was deemed satisfactory for the dissertation to have fulfilled the first criteria for assessing research quality, and that the three remaining criteria can be used to assess the quality of research done at the doctorate level or higher. Thus Table-1 will present and explain the concepts that belong to these criteria.

Table 1. Definitions of Concepts related to the criteria 'Credible'

Terminology	Definition
Rigorous	Research that is Contextual, Internally Valid and Reliable
Internally valid	A Correct Scientific Method (incl. research design) is used in relation to the Question and Context and a new Knowledge is provable.
Reliable	The chosen Scientific Method is appropriate for the Question and Context, and is documented in a Described Procedure that others could use to reach a similar result in the same Context.
Contextual	Existing Knowledge that is relevant to the Context is used, and is presented according to Rules for Descriprion.
Consistent	New Knowledge is logically linked to Existing Knowledge and is in accordance with the Scientific Method and Question at Hand.
Coherent	Adequate Consideration is given to the Existing Knowledge in the chosen Context.
Transparent	Relevant New Knowledge in the reporting of research results is included and the process is described in relation to the Question at Hand, Scientific Method and Existing Knowledge.

Source: (Mårtensson, P., Fors, U., Wallin., S., Zander, U., Nilsson, G, 2016, хуу∂. 597)

As seen from the table, in order to meet the requirements for the criteria 'Credible', the claim that is being made after research must have a strong basis and be supported by plausible arguments. In order to meet the requirements of Mårtensson's et al. (2016) theoretical model to assess the research quality of these master's dissertations, it was useful to apply Coughlan, Cronin, and Ryan's (2007) proposed questions to critique quantitative research, as well as that of the criteria known as CASP (critical appraisal skills programme), which provides a systematic assessment of descriptive research. CASP, also known as critical appraisal skills programme, is the general model that is used to evaluate descriptive research. These are based on 10 main questions and sub-questions, and its research design, gathering data, performing analysis, and determine if the results are accurate and understandable are ways to ascertain if research is internally consistent.

By explaining the theoretical concept of evaluating research quality, the CASP, the research quality principle of Coughlan, Cronin, and Ryan (2007:658) as well as that of Mårtensson and others' (2016:597), we are forming the basis for analysing the master's dissertations in the next section. Thus, the next section presents the questions and analysis used to evaluate the research work of master's students, which was based upon the theories and concepts of the previously mentioned researchers.

EVALUATION PROCESS OF THE QUALITY OF MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS

A. The basis for establishing the criteria for assessing the research quality

For this research, 13 of the 49 dissertations written by master's graduates in public

administration and public management in the spring of 2017-2018 academic year were collected for assessment by convenience sampling. The author was a member of the Defence Committee and later received permission to evaluate these works. Each dissertation was between 54-65 pages. For the purpose of analysis, the 16 criteria within seven categories were developed within the framework of the general criteria of credibility to define the quality of research (Refer to Table-2), which was presented by Mårtensson et al. (2016), as well as the assessment questions developed by Coughlan, Cronin, Ryan (2007), and CASP in relation to the General Guidelines for master's students of the NAoG (2016).

Table 2. Criteria for assessing research quality

№	Categories and criteria		Questions used for assessment
1	Internally valid: Research design	1.Research Problem	Is the problem clearly identified? In what ways? - is it linked to the existing knowledge, or is identified from a gap in knowledge?; -is it based on cases and facts?
		2. Research purpose and question(s)	- Are the research purpose and the question(s) logically related to the problem and the context? - What is the type of research question?
		3. Research approach and the methods used.	- Is the research approach used in the research design (qualitative, quantitative or mixed) appropriately chosen in relation to the problem addressed and the type of research question? - Is the type of study (exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory) applicably selected? - Are the methods employed justified or explained?
2	Coherent and consistent: Theoretical basis	4. Literature review	Use of existing knowledge: 1. Is the literature review logically organized? Is adequate consideration given to existing knowledge? 2. Is the review recorded in a listed manner? 3. Is the review compared and synthesized? 4. Does the review reveal a gap in knowledge in that sector?
		5. Conceptual framework	-How is the new knowledge linked to the existing knowledge? -Are the concepts in the conceptual framework explained?
		6. Hypothesis /if any/	If a hypothesis is identified: - Is the hypothesis testable and consistent with the conceptual framework? -Are the concepts measurable with variables?
3	Reliable: Methodology employed	7. Sample	-What is the sampling method? -Are the sampling steps clearly described? -Is the sampling described de facto used in the study?
		8. Method used for data collection	-Are the chosen methods justified? -Is the preparatory procedure clearly explained?
		9. Definitions of concepts and terms	Operational definitions: -Are the terms and concepts in the study clearly defined?
4	Transparent: Data analysis	10. Analysis	1. For Quantitative study: -What type of data and statistical analysis was undertaken? Was it appropriate? Significance of findings? 2. For Qualitative study: - Are the methods of analysis used systematically and clearly described? -Are the findings credible and supported by evidence?
		11. Reliability and validity	1. For Quantitative study: -Were reliability and validity testing undertaken and the results discussed? 2. For Qualitative study: -Is the research design defensible and trustworthy and linked to the research questions? How is the trustworthiness reached?

		12. Results and findings	-Are the findings logically related to the data and analysis?
5	Internally valid and transparent: Research results and conclusion	13. Discussion and conclusion	-Are the results discussed linked back to the literature review, or conceptual framework, - Are the research questions and hypothesis identified? -Is the study generalizable? If not why?
		14. Limitations of the study and further recommendations	-What kind of limitations of the study (e.g. in terms of design, data, sampling, methods, factors, analysis and results) are present? -What are the further recommendations following the limitations?
6	Transparent: Research ethics	15. Observation of the ethical principles	-Are there any explanations regarding ethical issues (e.g. consent sheet for interviews, anonymity, confidentiality and researcher's ethics?
7	Sources	16. Use of references and sources	-Were all the books, reports and journals referred to in the study accurately referenced?

The next section will describe the evaluation process of the thirteen research works, based upon the above (see Table 3) criteria.

B. The methods of the evaluation

Over the past 10 years of research methodology in social sciences being taught at the NAoG, this study is conducted to evaluate the dissertations of master's graduates and to assess the quality of their research practice. The first step in this process was to establish the conceptual framework that is identified in seven categories with sixteen criteria, each of which consists of the key questions.

For the purpose of the research ethical principles, the rights, and reputations of the collected sources were protected, and to prevent bias due to the fact that the researcher personally knows the academic supervisors and students, their names were concealed and were instead being referred to by the codes RW1-RW13 (research work 1, research work 13), and these codes were strictly enforced until the end of the summing up of the results and in the writing of this report.

The research works were analysed as to whether or not they had sufficient evidence to meet each criterion in Table-2. If there was evidence (+) was used and if there was no evidence (-) was used. If the evidence did not meet the requirements fully (+-) was used. Evidence was taken from the respective source and documented in Excel. (It is in Mongolian and can be obtained from the author).

Of the 13 works, nine were identified as being conducted in quantitative research design, two as qualitative, and two as mixed. In terms of the purpose of the study (Neuman, 1997:18-22; Babbie, 1994:84-86), three were mainly in the descriptive classification, six in quantitative explanatory, and two in qualitative descriptive. In order to meet the 'trustworthy' requirement for analysis, the process of how the criteria were established, and how they were used to evaluate research work was overseen by a colleague in the research methodology of the public administration class team. We discussed and agreed upon which criteria could be applicable in

these cases, and pieces of evidence from the dissertations for the criteria a researcher was hesitant about were debated until mutual agreement.

The next section describes how the results were evaluated by each of the 16 criteria.

C.   The results of the evaluation

The master's dissertations were evaluated according to the criteria to see whether they met the criteria listed above and the final summary is presented in Table3 (see Table-3).

For the quality of research work, being <u>internally valid</u> is vital, and upon looking at the evaluation results, while the research works were the weakest in the category 'internally valid', the criterion in which the research problem was proposed met the criteria best. In other words, out of a total of 13 dissertations, 9 connected the problem with previous knowledge or used specific evidence and examples to demonstrate that the research problem is a matter that should be researched. For example, the research problem of RW1 is based on previous knowledge: founding it upon Hans Eysenck's theory that defining the temperament of employees and distributing them correctly is the basis for company profit and noting that there is a lack of research that studied the correlation between the temperament of civil servants and their productivity in Mongolia, and explains that testing this theory became the basis for this research. There were 3 research works that failed to accurately define the research problem. Namely, while RW5 defined its research problem as "There is an increased need to study and compare the socioeconomic state of the residents in each of Ulaanbaatar's districts", and had an emphasis on poverty instead of explaining why there is a need to compare the districts. Thus, as there is no evidence to support the problem, there is no clear connection to poverty. On the other hand, when looking at the main components of meeting the criteria for internal validation, which is whether the design justifies the methods used to answer the research question, whether a design conforms to the methodology, and whether the research type fits the research design, most (between 10-11 works) did not meet the requirements. For example, in RW2, while the research design is not clear, the descriptive research question "How are the state organizations developing and utilizing employment specifications for their operations" proposed indicates it is qualitative research. However, while the research methodology chapter writes that the sources of the data are documents, during the analysis there were inconsistencies regarding whether or not an interview was conducted. Generally, stemming from a lack of understanding about what type of research work is being done, it is common to state that multiple research methods are used, or the hypothesis is drawn from descriptive research where none is needed seems common. For example, it is unclear what type of research RW3 is, but the data used were documents and reports, and while the analysis appeared to be descriptive, the methods used was written as interviews or statistics, and a hypothesis indicate explanatory research was used In this work, the concept of the research was written as being based on the concept of sustainable natural development, but how the research connected to this concept was unclear, and in the conclusion, there was no

Hillary Place Papers

Table 3. Summary of the results from evaluating master's research quality

№	Categories	Criteria	Questions to assess	Criteria met	Criteria not met	Criteria half met	Comments
1	Internally valid: Research design	1.Research Problem	Is the problem clearly identified? In what ways? - is it linked to the existing knowledge, or is identified from a gap in knowledge?; -is it based on cases and facts?	9	3	1	
		2. Research purpose and question(s)	- Are the research purpose and the question(s) logically related to the problem and the context? - What is the type of research question?	2	10	1	
		3. Research approach and the methods used.	- Is the research approach used in the research design (qualitative, quantitative or mixed) appropriately chosen in relation to the problem addressed and the type of research question? - Is the type of study (exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory) applicably selected? - Are the methods employed justified or explained?	2	11		Design rarely justifies the methods used to answer the research question.
2	Coherent and consistent: Theoretical basis	4. Literature review	Use of existing knowledge: 1. Is the literature review logically organized? Is adequate consideration given to existing knowledge? 2. Is the review recorded in a listed manner? 3. Is the review compared and synthesized? 4. Does the review reveal a gap in knowledge in that sector?			13	All 13 dissertations did not compare or classify the existing knowledge and the sources, and did not analyse the differences between previous theories and research. Only list of theories
		5. Conceptual framework	-How is the new knowledge linked to the existing knowledge? -Are the concepts in the conceptual framework explained?	1	7	5	It did not understand that the conceptual framework is the theory which directs the whole study, but wrote it as a 'symbolic' subchapter (7 works), and did not use it as a way to explain the research results or to tie the entire research together.
		6. Hypothesis /if any/	If a hypothesis is identified: - Is the hypothesis testable and consistent with the conceptual framework? -Are the concepts measurable with variables?	2	2	6	The definitions for the variable, and its supporting indicators were not clear and not operationalized.
3	Reliable: Methodology employed	7. Sample	-What is the sampling method? -Are the sampling steps clearly described? -Is the sampling described de facto used in the study?	8	2	3	Sampling criteria of interview participants are not clear.
		8. Method used for data collection	-Are the chosen methods justified? -Is the preparatory procedure clearly explained?	8	2	3	While these examples and methods used the questionnaire method, it was common for the works to not specify how they developed the questions, and whether or not it was based on operationalization.
		9. Definitions of concepts and terms	Operational definitions: -Are the terms and concepts in the study clearly defined?	5	7	1	Definitions of concepts and terms are not sufficient.

4	Transparent: Data analysis	10. Data Analysis	1. For Quantitative study: -What type of data and statistical analysis was undertaken? Was it appropriate? Significance of findings? 2. For Qualitative study: - Are the methods of analysis used systematically and clearly described? -Are the findings credible and supported by evidence?	4	4	5	The analysis of quantitative data is mainly done within descriptive statistics and correlations. No analysis of interviews.
		11. Reliability and validity	1. For Quantitative study: -Were reliability and validity testing undertaken and the results discussed? 2. For Qualitative study: -Is the research design defensible and trustworthy and linked to the research questions? How is the trustworthiness reached?		11	2	Only two works undertook the reliability testing which was a progressive step forward; the other works did neither reliability no validity at all.
5	Internally valid and transparent: Research results and conclusion	12. Results and findings	-Are the findings logically related to the data and analysis?	4	5	4	There are works that say that 'proved hypothesis based on document reviews.'
		13. Discussion and conclusion	-Are the results discussed linked back to the literature review, or conceptual framework. -Are the research questions and hypothesis identified? -Is the study generalizable? If not why?	1	12		The results did not link back to the literature review, or conceptual framework, the research questions and hypothesis were identified
		14. Limitations of the study and further recommendations	-What kind of limitations of the study (e.g. in terms of design, data, sampling, methods, factors, analysis and results) are present? -What are the further recommendations following the limitations?	7	5	1	There was a lopsided tendency to repeatedly describe how they selected the sample.
6	Transparent: Research ethics	15. Observation of the ethical principles	-Are there any explanations regarding ethical issues (e.g. consent sheet for interviews, anonymity, confidentiality and researcher's ethics?		13		Out of all of the dissertations, there was not one sentence that stated that the researcher followed the ethical principles of research, showing that dissertations failed to meet this requirement.
7	Sources	16. Use of references and sources	-Were all the books, reports and journals referred to in the study accurately referenced?	3	6	4	It was also common for the used sources in the literature review to not contain in the bibliography.

explanation connecting this concept to the research. Also, statistical analysis was not conducted and instead used the numbers from a ready report, and concluded that the hypothesis was proven despite not verifying the claim, and while claiming that a quality interview was conducted there was no proof of this data analysis. These are all examples of dissertations that are not internally valid.

Important things to assess when evaluating research quality are <u>coherency</u> and <u>consistency</u>. Within the framework, it was noted that it was common for the entirety of the research to have met this criterion moderately and that there was a tendency to approximate previous knowledge in a listed manner in order to connect it to the problem. To be more exact, all 13 dissertations did not compare or classify the existing knowledge and sources, and did not analyse the differences between previous theories and research. For example, in RW12 there was a concept known as "social welfare". When writing about this concept, six concepts (the Asian Development Bank, the International Labour Organisation, the International Monetary fund, the Mongolian Law on Social Welfare and concepts of Russian and Mongolian scientists) were just listed. However, it did not specify or examine what these definitions had in common, what ideas differed, and which ones are held more in Mongolia and simply recited them. It did not understand that the conceptual framework is the theory which directs the whole study, but wrote it as a 'symbolic' subchapter (7 works), and did not use it as a way to explain the research results or to tie the entire research together. As an illustration, RW12 stated its conceptual framework was the "implementation level of food and nutrition support services applied the 3-sided policy of social welfare", and wrote that it "used honest, beneficial, labor supportive policies", but it did not explain how it will guide, why these policies were used as a basis and in the summary and conclusion wrote only one sentence saying "the work was done with an emphasis on the 3 sided policy of social welfare services", and did not state how these 3 policies were adequately applied in the research. In regards to conducting quantitative explanatory research, the definitions of the variable and its supporting indicators were not clear and not operationalized.

The next important criterion for research is <u>reliability</u>. This concept comprises of how the data was collected (by interview, experiment, observation or questionnaire), how they developed the research methodology they will be using (state the instrument they used, or if they developed it themselves, then state what steps they took), accuracy and reliability, explaining and verifying the research procedures, and setting the context for how other people with a similar context can reach the same conclusion by using the methods used in the research. Within the framework of this criterion and the works that were evaluated, there are 8 research works that explained the steps of how they selected the sample. However, none of the works that used interviews mention how they made a sample of the participants of the research. There were 8 works that explained the research methods of how they gathered the data. However, while these examples and methods used the questionnaire method, it was common for the works to not specify how they developed the questions, and whether or not it was based on operationalization. While more than half of the total dissertations met the aforementioned two

requirements for reliability, there were 7 works that did not have sufficient operationalization for the indicators and the variables that are defined by them. Aside from this, no basis or definitions of the indicators were made.

<u>Research transparency</u> lies in connecting and relating the research question, research methods and existing knowledge to the new knowledge that was acquired as the result of the research, and explaining the research process openly and thoroughly. With this problem, criteria aside from research limitations were not met adequately. Of the total dissertations, 7 met the requirements, but there was a lopsided tendency to repeatedly describe how they selected the sample. In quantitative explanatory research, only two, or namely RW1 and RW4, undertook the reliability testing, which was a progressive step forward; the other works did neither reliability nor validity at all. Out of all of the dissertations, there was not one sentence that stated that the researcher followed the ethical principles of research, showing that dissertations failed to meet this requirement.

In conclusion, there was only one dissertation that met the discussion and conclusion requirements. In the remaining dissertations, the conclusions were restricted to stating that the hypothesis was proven and did not explain the entire research results within a theoretical and conceptual framework, and did not give a coherent explanation of how the hypotheses answered the question, and whether it is possible to generally relate the result to a greater set of population, and if not, there was no explanation why. It was also common for the used sources in the literature review to not contain in the bibliography.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the last years in Mongolian universities, especially in the social sciences field, the research practice is progressively enhancing while emphasizing on the importance of research methodology, and there is an increased focus on the research practice of degree students. However, the point is not in the amount of research we produce, but in the quality of the research practice. The research cases studied shows that it is important to ensure the quality of students' research practice to the next level, and to carefully focus on whether or not scientific critical principles are being rigorously followed in research.

This study aimed to answer the question of what the quality level of master's research practice at the National Academy of Governance is. In the span of ten years, after the NAoG began teaching and introducing quantitative and qualitative research methodology in social science at a level that is accepted at universities worldwide, it is very progressive that in the present day the format and the structure of the research work of master's students in public administration and business administration are becoming more and more acceptable.

However, in terms of the content and quality, as of today, out of the 13 dissertations that were evaluated, only three met at least a half of the 16 criteria in the seven categories. Out of these, it was evaluated that RW1 fully met four criteria and a half of three criteria, and thus adequately met the requirements of seven criteria, RW4

fully met eight criteria and half of the three criteria, and thus adequately met 11 criteria, and RW8 fully met 11 criteria.

Looking at these results, it shows that it is time to focus more on the credibility of the content of research practice, despite the fact that the results of this research are valid only for these cases sampled but cannot be generalised to all master's students at NaoG. While the form and format of the master's work are adequate, the content of the majority of the cases does not meet the requirements, and shows that the observance of the internal validity, reliability, transparency, coherence and consistence are still lagging behind a great deal.

Thus, when evaluating student research work during the defence committee meeting it is extremely one-sided to only discuss how the data was analysed, and what results were found (it is pointless to discuss it if it did not follow research methodology and thus has incorrect, inaccurate results). Instead, it is important to discuss the credibility and integrity of the research before moving to the results and findings, then the chances of further findings being accurate and truthful increase. In other terms, as a tree without roots does not grow, aside from the fact that research without a basis has no further benefits, and has the danger of misinforming people and society, it becomes an obstacle to the development of Mongolian education and research. It is worthy to think over the words of Kenneth Boulding (1941):

> "Theories without facts may be barren, but facts without theories are meaningless. It is only "theory"- i.e., a body of principles - which enables us to approach the bewildering complexity and chaos of fact, select the facts significant for our purposes, and interpret the significance. ".

References

Баатартогтох, Ц. (2012). *Нийгмийн шинжлэх ухааны судалгааны арга зүй.* Улаанбаатар: Удирдлагын академи.

Babbie, Earl. (1994). *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont: International Thomson Publishing Company.

Boulding Kenneth. (1941). *Economic Analysis.* Florida Gulf Coast University. http://itech.fgcu.edu/faculty/bhobbs/Boulding_on_Theory.htm

CASP. (2018). *https://casp-uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/CASP-Systematic-Revi-ew-Checklist.pdf*

Coughlan, M., Cronin, P.,& Ryan, F. (2007). Step-by-Step Critiquing Research. Part. 1. *Quantitative Research. Brtitish Journal of Nursing, Vol.16, No.11*.

Hoyland, H., Hagen, J., Engelbach, W. (2017). *Developing and Applying a Framework for Assessing the Research Quality of Qualitative Project Methods in the EU Project SECUR*. ed, Sage and Open Access Pages.

Kim, H., Sefcik, J., Bradway, C. (2016). *Characteristics of Qualitative Descriptive Studies: A Systematic Review.* Research in Nursing and Health, www.wileyonlinelibrary.com

Long, A. (2002). *Evaluation Tool for Quantitative Studies.* University of Leeds. Accessed July, 15, 2018. *https://usir.salford.ac.uk/.../1/Evaluation_Tool_for_Quantitative-_Research_ Studies.pdf*

Mårtensson, P., Fors, U., Wallin., S., Zander, U., Nilsson, G. (2016). *Eveluating Research Multidisciplinary Approach to Assessing Research and Quality.* Retrieved from Research Policy, 45: www.elsevier.com/locate/respol

Mertens, D. M. (2015). *Research Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods,* Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks. CA.

Neuman, W. L. (1997). *Social research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative, Approaches .* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Northcote, M. T. (2012). *Selecting Criteria to Evaluate Qualitative Research.* Education Papers and Journal Articles, 4, Avondale College, Research Online@Avondale

Science Council. (2009). Retrieved from www.sciencecouncil.org/definition

University of Leicester. (2016). Retrieved from https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ researchsupport/integrity

Vance, D. E., Talley, M., Azuero, A., Pearce, P. F., Christian, B. J. (2013). Conducting an Article Critique for a Quantitative Research Study: Perspectives for Doctoral Students and other Novice Readers. *Nursing: Research and Reviews. 3.* Dove press.

Author: Dr. NARANTUYA JUGDER, Department of Public Administration, National Academy of Governance, Mongolia

Email: Narantuya@naog.gov.mn

A Report on Attending a Conference on Early Childhood Studies

Dimah Hamad Aldosari, University of Leeds

I am a Saudi researcher interested in Early Childhood Studies, and I am conducting Ph.D. research in children's creativity in visual art. I recently had a valuable opportunity to attend a relevant conference that featured three well-known speakers in the field of Early Childhood Studies who discussed their recent research and projects. The AGM and Autumn Conference 'I am five and I know everything' was held on Saturday, 10 November 2018 at Middlesex University in London, United Kingdom. The conference was organised by Early Education, The British Association for Early Childhood Education, and was sponsored exclusively by Pearson Education. The conference ran from 9 am until 4 pm with two breaks, a short first one for coffee, which lasted for 15 minutes, and a long second one for lunch, which lasted for one hour and a half. There were over 50 attendees for all aspects of early years' education, including preschool teachers, undergraduates and postgraduate students, preschools' managers and owners and parents.

The first half hour was for registration, then the next hour was for an annual general meeting for Early Education. The British Association for Early Childhood Education presented the aims and progress of the association over the last year and thanked and honoured those who have been working with them and were about to retire, followed by a short break.

At 10:50 am the introduction and the welcome at the conference was planned to be presented by Professor Cathy Nuthrown, President of Early Education. However, for some reason the professor was unable to attend so one of the association members took over. The member spoke about the reason behind the title of the conference: 'I am five and I know everything'. It is the story of a child who she was trying to help, but he refused, saying he is five and knows what to do.

This report talks from the writer's perspective about the most important points that were presented as new and valuable information to be shared. The conference featured three speakers. The first one started at 11 am, then the second at 12 pm and the last one at 1:45 pm after the lunch break.

The first speaker

Rod Parker-Rees, visiting research fellow, University of Plymouth. Mr Parker-Rees' speech was about 'Playing in and Life Experience'.

Mr Parker-Rees spoke about how children learn more from families and home in

their daily lives than in school. Educators set up educational environments to provide children with learning experiences, but children learn more from what they experience and are involved in daily. This can be called Soft Knowledge.

Some of the most important points that were touched on are the following:
1. Children perform some actions and adopt attitudes from the context without Knowing the reason beyond them, simply by watching those who are around them.
2. When involved in an experiment, children tend to prefer people who are collaborators over those who are not.
3. Children care about what they and their families do. For example, what are they doing after having a meal? Or tomorrow?
4. The practice of sharing what happened during the day helps children to learn what can and cannot be said, what is important to be mentioned, and not so much by asking, what did you do today?

The second speakers

Isla Hill, Education Director, Make Believe Arts, and Bonnie Mendoza, reception teacher. Ms Hill's presentation was about what the speakers call Helicopter Stories. These are a way of supporting children to imagine and express themselves and their thoughts and feelings by telling their own stories. Having performed the Helicopter Stories approach on children five years old in her preschool for many years, Ms Hill talked about the impact and input of applying such a teaching approach to children of that age.

Some of the most important points that were presented are:
1. Children are always waiting to be asked to tell their stories.
2. It is important for children to tell their stories in order to form relationships with others because people read and listen to stories in order to understand others and feel sympathy for them.
3. A teacher's role is to help children find the answer or solution for their questions and issues, but not by giving it to them.
4. When a child is asked to tell a story and they make it up, their story should not be corrected to be more logical and meaningful, even if the whole story becomes only a name of someone.
5. It is important to ask children to act while telling stories. For example, when a child tells their story, it is vital to allow them to act by telling a child's story and asking the child and other children what a tree/a dinosaur looks like. And then allowing them to act as a tree/a dinosaur.

The third speaker

Professor Usha Goswami, University of Cambridge.
Professor Goswami's talk was called Communication, Language and Foundation for Literacy: The Early Years. The professor talked about the findings of recent research

on the development of language and communication in children from birth to six years old.

Some of the most important points that were presented are:

1. Infants make sounds in order to gain attention from the people around them and interact with them.
2. Children's brains interact with whomever is around them in terms of language, even when children are sleep.
3. By the age of six, children know 5000 words in their language.
4. Children's brains learn languages faster than adults until the age of ten or so.
5. When correcting children's sentences, educators should only repeat the sentences correctly.
6. Singing with children and clapping hands foster the process of learning language in the brain, especially for children who suffer from dyslexia.
7. The process of learning a language requires providing information from the surrounding environment through having meaningful conversations with children.
8. The quality of a story is not as important as the level of communication, interaction and sound making with children during the story time.
9. When knowledge is not shared with others, it becomes useless and without value.

All Professor Usha's collected points were based on research.

Finally, at 2:45 pm, the last talk was about Reclaiming Our Early Year Curriculum: A Conversation about Ways Forward. The talk was given by a member of the association. The last talk consisted mostly of members of the audience asking the speakers of the conference some questions and gathering some suggestions about the speeches and the conference and then discussing them until the end of the conference at 4 pm.

To sum up, the conference provided the results of recent research and new approaches regarding important topics in children's' lives such as play, story, communication, language and literacy, in order to apply to children in preschools. Also, listening to the audiences' experiences in relation to what was being presented, reflected the reality of English preschools and the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is different from my background experiences in preschools in my home country of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the experience of attending the conference was worth sharing and reporting about.

Author: Dimah Hamad M Aldosari, Ph.D. researcher in creativity in young children at the University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom. MA in Early Childhood Studies. Lecturer in Early Childhood department, Schools of Edcuation, Shaqra University, Shaqra, Saudi Arabia.

Email: eddhma@leeds.ac.uk

School of Education

Hillary Place

University of Leeds

Leeds, UK

LS2 9JT

e-mail: hppeditors@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS