

Action Research Section

Hong Kong Secondary School Teachers' First Experiences of Action Research

Andy Curtis
Queen's University, Canada

Abstract

In the first part of this paper, four themes in the literature on Action Research are identified and discussed: change, collaboration, professional development and reflective practice, in relation to the role of teachers as classroom researchers. The paper then describes a study in which 20 Hong Kong secondary school classroom teachers were asked to carry out small-scale Action Research studies, focusing on how they could increase and improve the quantity of spoken English used by their learners in their English lessons. Whilst this was the focus of the teachers' studies, this study focused on the feasibility of teachers working within such pressurized and constrained teaching-learning systems carrying out such research successfully, and what they can learn from doing so.

Introduction: Language Teachers as Classroom Researchers

Henrichsen's (1983) follow-up study of earlier surveys carried out by Allen (1966) and Fanselow and Light (1977) involved 153 respondents from 30 different countries rating the importance of 64 different ESOL teacher training items. The top ten items overall are a very interesting reflection of language teachers' pedagogic skills-oriented concerns at that time (p.23), now nearly 20 years ago:

- Specific training in how to teach listening comprehension
- Training in TESOL materials selection and evaluation
- Specific training in how to teach ESL reading
- Intercultural understanding
- Student teaching experience
- Specific training in how to teach ESL writing
- Specific training in how to teach conversation
- Specific training in how to teach pronunciation
- An understanding of the language learning process
- A knowledge of general, introductory linguistics

Listing the items like this makes it easy to see that "specific training in how to teach X" is the dominant concern. As with all such lists, however, it is the items that are *not* on the list which are of as great an interest as those on it. Although a survey

list compiled in 2001 might well include many similar items, one item conspicuous by its absence from the list above is: “specific training in how to carry out classroom research”.

Given that this list, though an extensive and international survey, is now nearly two decades old, it is possible to claim that much has changed since then. However, a leap of 15 years ahead shows that notion of “language teachers as classroom researchers” may still be considered an emerging one.

Larsen-Freeman (1998) presents a clear and concise summary of trends in the language teaching field by decade, from the 1950’s to the 1990’s, in order to make the point that, although the view of language learners has expanded considerably during the period, “language teacher education has not kept pace” (p.212). Concern over this limited view of teachers’ roles is voiced by others, for example, Richards (1989), who states that, from one training perspective: “Essentially, the teacher is viewed as a technician” (p.2) (see also, Curtis, 1999a and Curtis 1999b). However, Larsen-Freeman does give the following changing roles of language teachers during the same period:

- 1950’s – Model, Conductor
- 1960’s – Linguist
- 1970’s – Counselor, Facilitator
- 1980’s – Collaborator, Language Trainer
- 1990’s – Advocate, Activist

(p.213)

Although Larsen-Freeman does refer to the importance of teachers being reflective practitioners and having an “attitude of inquiry, a commitment to explore one’s practice” (p.219), she does not list Researcher as one of the main roles of language teachers.

Bell (1987) stated that: “There is nothing new about practitioners operating as researchers” (p.5) and Nunan (1992) described the language-related situation at that time as showing that: “There is evidence that the teacher-researcher movement is alive and well and gathering strength” (cited in Nunan, 1993, p.43). However, Hancock (1997) points out that, although: “the teacher-as-researcher movement has been in existence for some twenty years” (p.85), relatively few teachers become involved in research, for a number of reasons: teachers’ low professional status; their lack of confidence; their difficult working conditions; and the difficulties of applying ‘outsider’s’ research methodologies to their own contexts and classrooms. Although Hancock’s findings refer to the situation in England, some of his conclusions may well apply to the situation for many classroom language teachers elsewhere, including Southeast Asia.

What these studies seem to show is a tension, at least in language education, between the teacher-as-researcher trend as explored and discussed by university-based academics and the actual practices of classroom teachers working within contexts that may not be amenable to their development as researchers.

Despite this tension, the 1990s did see a considerable growth of interest in the notion of classroom-based research into language teaching and learning. In an early article designed “to encourage language teachers to become involved in research” (Cross, 1990, p.33), a number of reasons for and difficulties with this are discussed. In terms of reasons for this involvement, Cross gives the following: teachers “bear the brunt of changes” (ibid.) and need to be able to evaluate these changes, and they need to be able to defend the approaches they are using in “an objective and scientific way” (ibid.). Some of the challenges identified include: variables that cannot be controlled; knowledge of statistics required; the “courage and stamina [needed] to conduct research” (p.36), the latter item indicating the physical as well as psychological demands of carrying out research whilst working as a full-time teacher. In terms of research methods, another paper from the same time (Johnstone, 1990) suggest that teachers are likely to need help with answering questions such as: “What research methods will and will not be appropriate? How may these be acquired?” (p.25)

Aspects of Action Research and the Growth of Action Research

As van Lier (1994) has pointed out, the idea of Action Research (AR) is more than 50 years old, having been first used in the 1940's by, for example, Lewin (1946) and, according to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), the Commissioner of the US Bureau of Indian Affairs, J Collier, in 1945. AR has been defined in many different ways since then, and at least four recurring themes can be identified within the descriptions and definitions:

- Change
- Collaboration
- Professional Development
- Reflective Practice

Cohen and Manion (1980) defined AR as “an on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation” (p.178). They highlighted the step-by-step nature of the process, and the importance of findings being “translated into modifications, adjustments, directional changes, redefinitions, as necessary” (p.178). The management of change in language education has become an area of research in itself (Curtis, 1999c), and Nunan (1992) also identified change as an inherent part of a definition of AR, whilst Crawford (1995) stressed

investigation, inquiry and intent to change (p.239) as key features of AR. In relation to what it is that changes, Lewis (1992) succinctly linked four teachers' roles, as learners, researchers, reflective practitioners and agents of change: "The 'teacher as researcher' or 'reflection in action' approach to teacher education can be a very powerful way of facilitating change in curriculum" (Nunan, 1993, p.46).

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), however, emphasized the importance of collaboration between practitioners/classroom teachers, as well as the evolution of change, as a result of their AR. The importance of collaborative language teaching-learning is still being stressed generally, and in particular in relation to AR (Curtis, 1999d). Schecter and Ramirez (1992), for example, worked with a teacher-research group of 19 teachers, collaborating on a National Writing Project in the USA. Watt and Watt (1993), who described AR at that time, as "an evolving discipline" (p.36), worked with 100 teachers at nine sites in the USA, on an AR project focused on teaching problem-solving skills and mathematical inquiry. A number of researchers, such as Chamot (1995), have focused on both areas, change and collaboration, in relation to AR as "research conducted by teachers, often (though not always) in collaboration with others, and which frequently leads to changes in the instructional context" (p.1).

Calvert (1994) defines AR as a "vehicle for reflection", and in terms of reflective practice, professional development and AR, Lacey (1996), in her "confessions" of her "birth" as an action researcher (p. 349), focused on improvement-oriented change through reflective inquiry, making use of a personal diary. De Gauna, Diaz, Gonzalez and Garaizar (1995), working with preschool children (aged from 3 to 5) and looking at AR in relation to teachers as agents of change and curricular innovation in Spain, identified: "the change in school practice as interrelated with professional development" (p.183). This relationship is also highlighted in Bredeson and Scribner's (1996) study of school-university AR collaboration, and the professional development of a group of elementary school teachers in the USA.

Given the origins of all of these studies, it might be assumed that AR in language teaching-learning has been a predominantly North American or European phenomenon. However, this decade of growth in interest there has been accompanied by, though perhaps not matched by, a similar growth in Asia. Mahoney, Detaramani and Yu (1991), working with Hong Kong university students, combined action research and case study approaches. Gow, Kember and McKay (1996), also working in Hong Kong, focused on encouraging independent (student) learning at the tertiary level, and claimed improved student learning as a result of their AR project. Chan (1997) identified the same AR—professional development relationship with ELT practitioners, and Mok's (1997) school-based and student-based AR looked at secondary school English language enrichment program as a way of empowering the students. Elsewhere in the region, Gebhard (1998), for example, has explored approaches to second language teacher development in Korea, based on observation and AR.

The focus of this study

The importance of encouraging the use of spoken English in second language (L2) classrooms in Hong Kong was pointed out by Chen (1981) many years ago:

I have learned that the actual minutes or hours spent in an English language class may be the only time students really have the opportunity to speak English....Therefore, the English teacher's task should be to encourage the students to open their mouths and practice speaking English in the classroom setting

(p.124).

One of the first large-scale studies of this in Hong Kong was carried out by Lai in 1993, who identified “three main constraints in the English classroom – the language anxiety factor, the low self esteem factor and inadequate opportunities for meaningful communication” (p.40/41). Based on further research in Hong Kong classrooms, Tsui (1996) stated that:

Getting students to respond in the classroom is a particular problem that most ESL teachers face...The problem...is particularly acute with Asian students, who are generally considered to be more reserved and reticent than their Western counterparts

(p.145).

One important reason for the limited progress in this area in Hong Kong, despite nearly twenty years of research, may be the lack of practical, classroom-based research carried out by teachers to learn more about what is happening (and/or not happening) in their classrooms and why.

This research project, then, combines two areas – use of spoken English in ESL classrooms and use of practical, classroom-based action research – both of which have been recognized as not only being of importance, but also as areas in which there is still much progress to be made.

This project was designed, therefore, to address two main research questions:

1. Can teachers working in environments such as Hong Kong and elsewhere, with the pressures on and constraints of their working environments, successfully engage in practical, classroom-based action research?
2. If so, what can the teachers learn about themselves, their students and their teaching and learning environments through an exploration of the underlying causes of limited use of English in their English lessons?

Research Design and Procedures

As stated above, the aim of this research project was to introduce a group of Hong Kong secondary school teachers to an AR-based approach to finding out more about what is (not) happening in their classrooms, in particular in relation to their students' limited or lack of spoken English during English lessons.

A group of 20 secondary school teachers attended a fifteen-hour in-service course arranged over six Saturday mornings (2.5 hours sessions). The course, *Language Systems and the English Syllabus for Secondary Schools*, was organized by the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPACE), part of the University of Hong Kong, and was taught and assessed by the author.

Although the course designer-presenter put forward the focus of the AR projects, ie, how to encourage the use of more spoken English in class through an exploration of causes and the development of possible solutions, the teachers were given the option to develop their own different focus. However, as the above discussion of previous studies shows, this has been an area of concern for Hong Kong teachers for some considerable time, and all 20 of the teachers chose to focus on the promotion of spoken English in their classrooms.

The course was assessed according to two basic criteria: attendance at and contribution to the six course meetings, and completion of an end-of-course assignment. The assignment required them to write a report (approximately 4 to 6 pages, or 1,000 to 1,500 words) based on their exploration and investigation of reasons why their students were using little or no spoken English during their English classes, and on the implementation and evaluation of intervention strategies designed to promote this type of in-class interaction.

Each teacher was given four weeks after the end of the course to write up their reports and submit them for assessment. During the completion of the assignments, the teachers were encouraged to contact the course teacher if they had any problems or difficulties.

Collection and Analysis of Data

The teachers were asked to gather data from four related but distinct sources. They first wrote an account of what they thought were the reasons for the relative lack of use of spoken English in their classrooms, drawing on and reflecting on their own teaching experience.

They were then required to observe and note, but not evaluate, what was actually happening in their classroom during the English lessons. To avoid the tendency to evaluate, rather than observe, the teachers were given guidance, for example,

showing and stressing the difference between: ‘When put into groups, the students soon stopped attempting to speak in English and went back to speaking in Cantonese’ – an observation, versus ‘Attempts to get students to speak English in small groups *didn’t work*’ – an evaluation.

The third part of the process required the teachers to talk to and exchange with other teachers – their colleagues and peers – about their experiences of this situation, and what their peers thought were the reasons for this. Then the teachers did the same with their own students, using whatever language the students felt most comfortable with, i.e., usually spoken Cantonese, if face-to-face, or written Chinese, if on a questionnaire. Most, though not all, of the teachers were able to carry out parts three and four, as some of them reported that, for various reasons, they had little or no contact with their peers, and some reported that their younger learners were ‘too shy’ to talk with their teachers about the reasons for their in-class English language behavior, fearing that they might ‘get into trouble’ or ‘be misunderstood’.

It is the teachers’ written reports (approximately 100 pages of double-spaced text) of their projects which form the basis of the qualitative data for this study, together with informal follow-up interviews with some of the teachers during the completion of their assignments, and after their reports had been submitted, read and assessed.

Teachers’ Identification of Project Outcomes and Their Own Learning

The factors identified by the teachers which were limiting their students’ use of spoken English in class are reported in detail elsewhere (Curtis 1999e, Curtis 1999f). Having identified these, the teachers then set about trying to change their own behavior as well as trying to motivate students using, for example, more information-gap games. Although the teachers found that their attempts to increase the use of spoken English in their classrooms were met with varying degrees of success, all of the teachers agreed that positive change had occurred. However, one of the most important findings was the teachers’ belief-realization that they were *able to* and capable of doing research *in and into* their own classrooms. There was also the teachers’ belief-realization that they could learn more about what was happening in their classrooms, which could help them to better understand the language teaching and happening learning (or not) in their classrooms through this kind of small-scale AR project. This increased awareness and knowledge led to a greater understanding, which, in turn, led to these teachers trying out new approaches, techniques, tasks and activities, as this teacher’s conclusion showed:

Reviewing the questionnaire results did give me an opportunity to try and reach the lower ability boys via a sporting interest – football. They

are more interested, motivated and animated when discussing the chances of Ajax, Porto, Manchester United, [European football teams] etc. than when discussing the future perfect continuous tense (who isn't?).

(Lawrence).

Overall, this project has been worthwhile. Personally it has reminded me of how important a role T [teacher] behaviour has in classroom interaction. The project stimulated a questionnaire [given to students] the results of which produced a new strategy which is having a positive effect on oral ability and T/P [teacher/pupil] interaction in the classroom.

(Lawrence).

Lawrence's two responses, the first from an earlier part of his report, the second from its conclusion, presents a number of answers to the question of what teachers can learn from carrying out small-scale action research in(to) their own classrooms. Firstly, from a methodological, data-gathering point of view, Lawrence learned that a short, simple questionnaire on student interests enabled him to discover a common interest shared between himself and his students, European football. Secondly, his parenthetical reference, "who isn't", though presumably partly for humorous effect, also indicates a shared *lack* of interest, in the formal study of English grammar, and a preference for developing oral English discussion skills, which was the main language-oriented aim of his project. These two outcomes may represent relatively 'new' knowledge and understanding, but an additional, alternative point relates to the remembering function of reflective practice. In this case, a teacher has been reminded, through their own inquiry, of the potentially negative influence of the teacher on classroom interaction, as April noted:

I think teachers can be the major reason why there is a lack of oral interaction in English classrooms

(April).

Such realizations or reminders may also help to avoid any tendency to point to students' behavior as the main cause for the lack of oral interaction in English. This role-related outcome was a recurring theme in the project reports:

As a teacher, I play the role of a helper rather than a dictator in the class. I move around the class to listen and help individuals. The designed activities allow the focus to shift from the teacher to the task and to the whole class, group or pair co-operation. I find this project very useful and successful because my passive kids are willing to speak English afterwards.

(Ling).

Although it can be claimed the Ling is still identifying students' behavior as the key, she has also an altered perception of her own role, together with a change of focus, with more emphasis on cooperative and collaborative tasks. Whilst Lawrence focused on what he learned about his students' interests, Ling focused on the tasks and activities she designed, based on what she learned about interaction in her class.

The metaphor of enhanced vision, through empathetic understanding, was put to good use by Richard, with point-of-view, insight and observation recurring themes.

As a teacher this project has generally encouraged me to put myself in my students' shoes, to look at oral participation from their point of view... The project has given me clearer insight into why some students do not or do not want to speak out in class by asking me to identify reasons for lack of oral participation and finding adequate strategies to counter act these problems. I have also developed my observational skills as a teacher, noting down errors for later use in feedback sessions

(Richard).

The emphasis here is on the teacher's increased awareness and understanding of students' lack of participation, and a potentially important difference between ability to and desire to participate. As did Lawrence, Richard refers to the development of teaching-learning strategies, in addition to development of his skills as a teacher.

The remaining two extracts highlight, *inter alia*, a need for caution when interpreting research findings and the on-going, cyclical nature of action research, as stressed by, for example, van Lier (1994) (as discussed earlier):

The results of the project further consolidate my teaching strategy. I have always thought that children learn most effectively through play, because of its enjoyable, self-initiated and low risk nature characteristics... Teachers therefore have to achieve a balance between coping with the tightly-packed curriculum and making the students learn enjoyably

(Carrie).

Again, development of teaching-learning strategies is identified, although teachers may need to be made aware of the use of research to reinforce long-held beliefs, in this case about the effectiveness of play, which may preclude adequately critical interpretation. It is probably as true in life in general as it is research, that we find it easier and more comforting to have our existing view of the world validated – rather than challenged.

As regards improving P/P [pupil-pupil] interaction in English, I have to report a general lack of success. The products of P/P interaction, e.g. group answers on a worksheet or T/P [teacher-pupil] interaction via feedback, are acceptable and improving but the process of achieving the product is conducted in a mixture of Cantonese and English

(Lawrence).

This last extract shows a balanced outcome, in the sense that some of the changes the teacher wished to bring about have occurred, but there is still work to be done and more progress to be made on the part of both parties, teacher and students.

Comparison of results from this study with another

There appear to be few studies, especially in this part of the world, in which language teachers, are asked: What are the most significant things you have learned in carrying out your classroom research? As this is precisely the question asked by Nunan (1993) of a group of language teachers in Australia, it is worth comparing what they reported with what the teachers in this study reported. The 25 Australia-study responses to this question include:

- “The active involvement of the children in the learning process facilitates learning”
- “It is easy to ‘spoon feed’ children, but this leads to ineffective learning”
- “Working with the children together (e.g. finding their thoughts/feelings and acting on them”)
- “The process dramatically enhanced my rapport with students”
- “By collecting and analyzing data on my children, I found they were more highly motivated than I had given them credit for”
- “I discovered that kids know how to learn – the project taught me to listen to them”

(pp.49-50).

Although the responses from the teachers in the two studies are not the same, there are some similarities, for example, comments from both groups show that the teachers awareness of classroom dynamics in terms of teacher-student interaction, and their expectations of their learners (and perhaps themselves), had been raised.

Another similarity between the two sets of responses is the realization that AR cannot provide all the answers, as acknowledged by researchers (Nunan, 1996), as shown by comments like Lawrence's above, reporting the "general lack of success" in one area, and comments by teachers in the Australian study:

"I was disappointed. I expected too much in my initial project."

"There was a negative outcome for me – I've learned not to expect children to have completed tasks or to value something just because they're important to me"

(p.50).

It must be pointed out, however, that these two comments are the only two 'negative outcomes' in the 25 responses, showing that, on balance, AR is felt to have been well worth the effort because the practical, classroom benefits that result from the increased awareness and understanding coming out of the AR projects.

Conclusion

The answer to the first question posed at the start of this study: Can teachers working in environments such as Hong Kong and elsewhere, with the pressures on and constraints of their working environments, successfully engage in practical, classroom-based action research? appears to be a clear: Yes. How 'typical' teachers are in such a study such as this is open to question, in that teachers who attend additional courses such as the one they followed are usually highly motivated, interested in and open to learning and changing. However, leaving the question of 'typicality' aside, based on the results of this study, it does seem that even classroom teachers under constant and considerable pressure can, in relation to the second question posed, with a clear focus, guidance, support and motivation, learn a great deal about themselves, their students and their teaching and learning environments through Action Research.

The Author

Andy Curtis is a Visiting Scholar at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Canada. He is the co-author of *Pursuing Professional Development: The self as source (2001)* written with Kathi Bailey and David Nunan, which explores the theory and practice of different approaches to the professional development of language teachers.

References

- Allen, H.B. (1966). *TENES: A survey of the teaching of English to non-English speakers in the United States*. Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers.
- Bell, J. (1987). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Open University Press: Buckingham.
- Bredeson, P.V. & Scribner, J.P. (1996). Professional development through action research: a collaborative school/university project. *Planning and Change*, 27(1/2), 74-88.
- Calvert, M. (1994). Action research: A vehicle for reflection. In A. Peck & D. Westgate (Eds.), *Language teaching in the mirror* (pp.80-84). London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.
- Chamot, A. U. (1995). The teacher's voice: Action research in your classroom. *ERIC/CLL New Bulletin*, 18(2), 1 & 5-8.
- Chan, Y.H. (1997). Action research as professional development for ELT practitioners. *Pedagogic Development, Learning and Work: Hong Kong Polytechnic University Working Papers in ELT and Applied Linguistics* 2(1), 17-28.
- Chen, V. (1981). Ways of encouraging pupils to speak English in class. In C. Yet-shing, G. Wiersma and G.J. Hung (Eds.), *The teaching of English in Hong Kong* (pp.124-130). Hong Kong: The Eagle Press.
- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1980). *Research methods in classrooms and schools: A manual of materials and methods*. London: Harper and Row.
- Crawford, K. (1995). What do Vygotskian approaches to psychology have to offer action research. *Educational Action Research*, 3(2), 239-247.
- Cross, D. (1990). Design for classroom research in language learning. *Language Learning Journal*, 2, 33-36.
- Curtis, A. (1999a). Re-visioning our roles: Teachers as experts, researchers and reflective practitioners. *ThaiTESOL Bulletin*, 12(2), 24-32.
- Curtis, A. (1999b). Changing roles for language teachers in the new era. In *Selected proceedings of the eighth ETA-ROC international symposium on English teaching (November)* (pp.37-47). Taipei, Taiwan: Crane Publishing.
- Curtis, A. (1999c). Changing the management of change in language education: Learning from the past, lesson for the future. *PASSA*, 29, 92-100.
- Curtis, A. (1999d). Collaboration as the key to excellence. In *ELT collaboration: Towards excellence in the new millennium: Selected papers from the 4th CULI international conference (December)* (pp.15-27). Bangkok, Thailand: Chulalongkorn University Language Institute.
- Curtis, A. (1999e). Using action research in exploring the use of spoken English in Hong Kong classrooms. In C.H. Mee & N.S. Moi (Eds.), *Language instructional issues in Asian classrooms* (pp.75-88). Newark, DE: IDAC/International Reading Association.
- Curtis, A. (1999f). What EFL teachers learn from action research. In *Proceedings of the 1998 Korea TESOL Conference -- Advancing our Profession: Perspectives on Teacher Development and Education* (October) (pp.9-14). Korea: KOTESOL.

- De Guana, P.R., Diaz, C., Gonzalez, V. & Garaizar, I. (1995). Teachers' professional development as a process of critical action research. *Educational Action Research*, 3(2), 183-194.
- Fanselow, J.F. & Light, R.L. (1977). *Bilingual, ESOL and foreign language teacher preparation: models, practices and issues*. Washington, D.C: TESOL.
- Gebhard, J. (1998). Second language development and Korea. *Korea TESOL Journal*, 1(1), 1-10.
- Gow, L., Kember, D. & McKay, J. (1996). Improving student learning through action research into teaching. In D. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences* (pp.243-265). Hong Kong: CERC and ACER.
- Hancock, R. (1997). Why are class teachers reluctant to become researchers? *British Journal of In-service Education*, 23(1), 85-99.
- Henrichsen, L.E. (1983). Teacher preparation needs in TESOL: The results of an international survey. *RELC Journal*, 14(1), 18-45.
- Johnstone, R. (1990). Action research in the foreign language classroom. *Language Learning Journal*, 1, 22-25.
- Kemmis, S., and McTaggart, R. (Eds.). (1988). *The action research planner*. Geelong, Australia: Deakins University Press.
- Lacey, P. (1996). Improving practice through reflective enquiry: Confessions of a first-time action researcher. *Educational Action Research*, 4(3), 349-361.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (1998). Expanding roles of learners and teachers in learner-centred instruction. In W. Renandya & G.M. Jacobs (Eds.), *Learners and language learning* (pp.207-226). Singapore: SAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2, 34-46.
- Lewis. (1992). *Action research with French immersion teachers: A pilot study*. Unpublished monograph. University of British Columbia, Canada.
- Lai, C. (1993). Communication failure in the language classroom: An exploration of causes. *City Polytechnic of Hong Kong Department of English. Research Report No. 25*.
- Mahoney, D., Detaramani, C. & Yu, B. (1991). Let's do something about it! An action research case study. *Perspectives: Working Papers in the Department of English, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong*, 3(2), 25-43.
- Mok, A. (1997). Student empowerment in an English language enrichment programme: An action research project in Hong Kong. *Educational Action Research*, 5(2), 305-320.
- Nunan, D. (1996). The more things change, the more they stay the same: Or why action research doesn't work. In *Bringing about change in language education: Proceedings of the 1994 International Language in Education Conference* (pp.1-19). Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong.
- Nunan, D. (1993). Action research in language education. In J. Edge & K. Richards (Eds.), *Teachers develop teacher research* (pp.39-50). Oxford: Heinemann.

- Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. (1989). Beyond training: Approaches to teacher education in language teaching. *Perspectives: Working Papers in the Department of English, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong*, 1(1), 1-12.
- Schechter, S.R. & Ramirez, R. (1992). A teacher-research group in action. In D. Nunan (Ed.), *Collaborative language learning and teaching* (pp.192-207). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tsui, A. (1996). Reticence and anxiety in second language learning. In K. Bailey and D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom: Qualitative research in second language education* (pp.145-167). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- van Lier, L. (1994). Action Research. *Sintagma*, 6, 13, 31-37.
- Watt, M.L. & Watt, D.L. (1993). Teacher research, action research: The logo action research collaborative. *Educational Action Research*, 1(1), 35-63.